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THE FLIP PROGRAM: A QUALITATATIVE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF NATIVE OFFENDERS RECONNECTING TO NATIVE SPIRITUALITY AND IDENTITY

BY

B. MARILYN MOGEY

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN

FAMILY STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN ECOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1994

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Dianne K. Kieren, Supervisor

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TANSI

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to describe the nature of the backgrounds and experiences of male Native collaborators who participated in the Family Life Improvement Program (FLIP) at the Stan Daniels Center. Using an ethnographic qualitative approach, a total of twelve collaborators were asked to share their stories with another collaborator/ principle investigator who also participated in the FLIP program. The primary research question which providedthe focus for the research was: What is the nature of the experiences of male Native offenders attending a program, FLIP, that is designed to facilitate the transition from correctional institutions to the community? Three secondary questions focused on the intrapersonal processes of: engaging in self discovery, reclaiming Native culture and reconnecting to Native spirituality.

Nine male Native offenders, and three other collaborators involved with the FLIP program were interviewed. All the collaborators shared similar experiences of the FLIP program. During the focused group and one on one interviews, the collaborators shared stories of their background, and the nature of their experiences in the FLIP program. Before beginning the process of turning themselves around, the collaborators were influenced by: their family interactions, significant others, alcohol and drugs, the education system, the institutional system, and finally, being silenced and feeling invisible.

The FLIP program provided an opportunity for the collaborators to begin the process of self discovery, to reconnect to Native identity and spirituality, and to begin the process of healing. The holistic framework of Native culture and spirituality was interwoven throughout the FLIP program. Sharing your story, with your own people, who have shared similar versions of the *same* story enabled the collaborators to begin the process of change.

Through their experiences in FLIP, the collaborators reframed their personal philosophies, reconnected with their Native identity, examined their oppression, established new goals and developed strategies to enhance their transition to the community. The need to escape the web of silence and invisibility through being listened to and heard was a recurring theme throughout the research study.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION TO THE JOURNEY

Many people have expressed concern about the number of Aboriginal[1] persons who are in the Canadian correctional system. Researchers, Native leaders and governmental officials continue to ask, why is this profile evident? And why does it persist? In the process of investigating these questions, one cannot ignore the harsh social and economic realities and ecology of Native life in Canada.

Indigenous people, including Status Indians, Non-Status Indians, Inuit and Metis, have the lowest socio-economic status in Canada. In general, the Aboriginal population is characterized by high unemployment rates, low incomes, inadequate housing, lack of work skills, low levels of education, high rates of family violence and abuse, community disorganization, as well as high suicide, violent death, alcoholism, and crime rates (Frideres, 1988; Murphy, 1991; Nielsen, 1990).

The Demographic Profile of Native Offenders

Statistics on both incarceration and recidivism indicated that the Aboriginal population is disproportionately overrepresented in the correctional system (Jackson, 1989; Moyer, Kopelman, LaPrairie, & Billingsley, 1985; Verdun-Jones & Muirhead, 1979/80). Native people make up approximately two percent of the total Canadian population, whereas Native male offenders make up ten percent and Native female offenders make up thirteen percent of the prison population (Correctional Law Review, 1988). The proportion of incarcerated Natives continues to grow (Newby, 1981). Given these figures, it is not surprising that Native people are the single largest ethnic minority group in provincial and federal institutions in Canada (Nielsen, 1990).

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[1] The terms, Aboriginal, Native and Indigenous will be used interchangeably throughout the resesearch study to describe the founding peoples of North America.

Reflecting upon the gradual upward spiral of the rate of recidivism, one must also consider the nature of correctional policies and programs: are they sensitive to and appropriate for Native offenders?

In the 1960's, there were no policies nor programs designed to meet the needs of Native inmates. However, throughout the late 1960's and early 1970's, Native Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods were formed inside the correctional institutions. By and large, these organizations were run by Native inmates with the support of outside criminal justice agencies. These groups became the focus of Native cultural and spiritual activities inside the penal institutions. The Native Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods inside, as well as public awareness and concern outside, influenced the development of new corrections policy and program guidelines.

The Policy and Programs of Corrections Canada

In general, the Correctional Services of Canada has increasingly become more sensitive to the unique situation of Native offenders in penal institutions. For example, the National Conference of Native Peoples and the Criminal Justice System held in Edmonton, Alberta in 1975 focused on the relationship between Native offenders and the criminal justice system. In the 1980's, a number of new initiatives were introduced. The increased availability of Elders to Native inmates, ongoing support of the Native Brotherhood organizations and the implementation of more rehabilitative and educational programs are some examples of these new initiatives. Some of the program initiatives introduced by the Correctional Services of Canada focused on topics such as anger management, drugs and alcohol abuse, and life skills.

In 1983, policy proposals to the Federal Solicitor-General included hiring more Native staff, and introducing more Native spiritual programs (Newby, 1981). Beginning in 1985, these recommendations were gradually integrated into the criminal justice system. As a result, Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) signed a contract with Correctional Services of Canada to operate the Stan Daniels Correctional

Center, which changed hands in April, 1988. The Stan Daniels Center is the only Native Correctional facility in North America (Cunningham, 1994). SDC[2] was founded on a holistic philosophy that emphasizes Native tradition and spirituality. Shortly thereafter, the Family Life Improvement Program (FLIP) was implemented at the Stan Daniels Correctional Center (SDC). The underlying philosophical basis of the Family Life Improvement Program reflected the holistic mandate of the Stan Daniels Correctional Center. The program provided the participants with the opportunity to become re-acquainted with their Native roots. The Family Life Improvement Program, (FLIP)[3], helped the participants to explore their self-defeating feelings, behaviors and attitudes, using their own Native traditions and spirituality as a point of reference. Aboriginal residents participated in the FLIP program prior to their release into the community.

The mission statement of the Correctional Services of Canada states the following strategic objective in reference to Native offenders: "To ensure the special needs of female and Native inmates are addressed properly." (Native Advisory Committee, 1989, p. 5). In spite of the new initiatives that were introduced, the rates of incarceration and recidivism have not decreased. Although the programs are intended for Native inmates, some may neither "culturally sensitive" (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991) nor "culturally conscious" (Morrisette, MacKenzie & Morrisette, 1993). Evaluation data are largely unavailable as few of the new program initiatives have been assessed (Zellerer, 1992). More specifically, there is little information which documents whether the experiences of Native offenders in the programs reflected the desired outcome and objectives of the program. Quite simply, Native offenders have

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[2] The terms, Stan Daniels Correctional Center, The Stan Daniels Center and SDC will be used interchangeably throughout the research study to refer to the Stan Daniels Correctional Center.

[3] The Family Life Improvement Program will be referred to as FLIP throughout the research study.

not been asked for their feedback on programs that are intended to meet their needs. For the most part, neither Native researchers nor community members have been involved in the process of developing and assessing Native-oriented programming.

The Research Questions

Developing, implementing and evaluating programs based on the experiences and perceptions of Native peoples themselves is long overdue. Such activity demands a commitment of resources towards research, program planning, and evaluation research initiatives. The present research described in the thesis addressed one aspect of this need. This study has focused upon a broadly based Native family life program, the FLIP program, from within a correctional institution. In order to richly describe the nature of the experience of Native offenders, and understand their journey from the institution to the community, an ethnographic qualitative method was used. This is but one part of the journey. The research question which provided the focus for the research is: What is the nature of the experiences of male Native offenders attending a program designed to facilitate the transition from correctional institutions to the community? Embedded within the larger research question are a number of secondary questions. Three of the secondary questions were:

1) What is the nature of the self-discovery process that participants attending the FLIP program experience?

2) How does the FLIP program help Native participants to reconnect with their culture and how does this knowledge help the participants' transition to the community?

3) What is the role of Native spirituality in the FLIP program? For example, does the dialogue shared within the traditional healing circle in the program enable residents to examine their self-defeating feelings, attitudes and beliefs as well as begin the process of initiating change?

Chapter Two

BACKGROUND LITERATURE TO THE JOURNEY

This research study sought to discover the nature of the experience of Native offenders attending a program designed to facilitate the offender's transition from correctional institutions to the community. Reviewing the existing literature provided a rationale and context for the proposed study. The following sections are included: the historical context, the cultural context, the community and personal context, the societal and criminal justice context, the research context, and the correctional and program context. The chapter concludes with a preliminary sketch of the Family Life Improvement Program (FLIP), the specific program being addressed in this study. Through an examination of the literature, the significance of designing an emergent study to explore the nature of the experiences of male Native residents of the Stan Daniels Correctional Center was highlighted.

The Historical Context

Exploring the historical situation of Aboriginal Canadians helps us to understand the development of the contemporary relationship between Native peoples and Canadian society. Traditionally, Aboriginal peoples lived in both hunting and agricultural-based societies. As North American indigenous peoples, they trace their roots back to "time immemorial". The Aboriginal world view espoused the belief that we are the caretakers of the earth's resources and as such, share a symbiotic relationship to the earth and all living things.

Initial Contact

Initial contact, including the period before the 1870's between Native peoples and their European visitors varied in different locales throughout North America. For example, cooperation between Natives and non-Natives enabled the fur trade to expand westward across Canada (Foster, 1986). Local adaptations to the environment such as pemmican and well developed bush skills shared by Native guides and trappers, as well as alliances cemented through marriage, enabled the Europeans to survive and prosper.

After the 1870's, once the fur trade empire was established, the westward movement of white settlers eroded the lifestyle of Native tribes residing on the Plains. Instead of continuing the established pattern of mutual acknowledgment and respect for difference, Native ways were denigrated. The buffalo, the basis of the Native economic livelihood, was threatened with extinction. Traditional practices which had sustained Aboriginal society for generations were questioned. For instance, Native spirituality, the training and education of children, the establishment of mutual obligations and responsibilities based on the kinship system, and methods for resolving disputes and maintaining cohesion and cooperation within the tribes on the prairies were regarded as inferior to the European way of handling these matters.

Colonization and Assimilation

After Confederation in 1867, the government adopted a paternalistic approach in its dealings with Aboriginal peoples. As a result, protecting, civilizing and assimilating Native peoples became the cornerstone of government policy towards Aboriginal peoples (Tobias, 1983). Natives were perceived to be "savages" in need of civilization. In addition, Native people were considered to be subordinate, incapable of making their own decisions and therefore needing the protection and counsel of the dominant authorities in power. The policy makers assumed that "Indian problems would vanish if only they could be made to adopt white values and beliefs" (Kellough, 1980, p. 635). Assimilation is the process by which one group, usually a smaller, less

powerful, subordinate group, adopts the values, beliefs and cultural practices of another group, usually a larger, more powerful, dominant group. The goal of assimilation was to transform Aboriginal people into white Canadians through their adoption of the values, belief system and cultural practices of the dominant Euro-Canadians (LaPrairie, 1987; Zellerer, 1992).

Another paternalistic approach practiced by the Canadian government that resulted in the further subordination of Aboriginal peoples was the distinction created by the Indian Act (1876, 1880, 1920, 1922, 1933, 1951) that narrowly defined "who" an Indian was. This arbitrary legal definition implemented by a non-Native parliament has created long standing divisions and inequalities between on and off reserve, status and non-status Indians and Metis. The Indian Act has restricted Native political involvement, marriage partners, enfranchisement, property ownership and freedom to participate in Canadian society. The restrictions imposed over two hundred years ago on individuals, families and communities continue to influence the identity of Aboriginal Canadians today. Examining the historical situation of Aboriginal Canadians provides the background to an examination of the profile and experiences of the male Native offender.

The Cultural Context

Although Native people represent only 2% of the Canadian population, they are the largest single ethnic minority group found in the criminal justice system (Nielsen, 1990). Therefore, a preliminary description of the cultural context was necessary before exploring or describing the nature of the experiences of Native offenders.

Every human group that is together for a period of time will evolve a culture. Culture is that collection of behavior patterns and beliefs that constitute "standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it" (Goodenough, 1971, p. 21-22).

The culture of Aboriginal peoples has evolved over millenniums, and their ability to be adaptive and flexible to changing environments has ensured their survival. The framework of Native culture was the collective entity. The development of Aboriginal culture involved the exercise of responsibility on the part of all members for the benefit of the group. Interdependence and a collective approach to responsibility was characteristic of Aboriginal society. In the following paragraphs, the values and beliefs that are fundamental to the Aboriginal culture are briefly outlined.

World View

The world view of Native peoples was expressed through the integration of the *newo* [4](four) dimensions: of human beings: spiritual, mental, physical and emotional, are integrated through (an all encompassing way of life), "*meo matsuin*" (McCree, 1994). Native culture espoused the view that relating to oneself and others is traditionally from "*mistikwanihk ohci ekwa*" (the heart) and not (the head)"*mitehihk ohci*" (Hunter, 1994). Native people sought to maintain a spiritual way of life on a daily basis: within themselves, their community and the universe. Answers were found through integrating the holistic directions of the circle: within oneself, through group consensus in the community and by striving for ecological harmony and balance within the cosmos.

The notion of balance was an important concept embraced by Aboriginal culture. In the Native world view, the needs of the family, community and nation were balanced with Mother Earth. The concept of the circle illustrated the idea of balance, as captured in models such as the Medicine Wheel and also exemplified in the traditional healing circle.

Balance within creation was maintained by a connection to *"Manitowa(h)"* (the Great Spirit or Creator). The earth was presided over by *"Manitowa(h)"* and managed

---

[4] The italicized words in the following section are Cree words. The English equivalent follows in parentheses.

itself; it possessed life. The individual was only a part of the whole and as a consequence must flow with course of nature. He/she had no right to try and change nature.

Spirituality and connection to *"Manitowa(h)"* pervaded all aspects of Aboriginal life. Spirituality and culture are intimately connected. The central meaning of life was in the vision quest. Each person had a Guardian Spirit who acted as his/her guide in the present and the hereafter. Spirituality was a total way of life practiced on a day to day basis that confirmed and enhanced a sense of personal worth and respect for others.

Elders and Medicine people were the teachers of traditional wisdom, healing and spirituality. Healing the spirit was a holistic practice integrating the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual dimensions. Although in general, old people were accorded much respect, Elders were not necessarily those of advanced years. Instead, Elders were chosen by virtue of their spiritual connection to *"Manitowa(h)"*, their special gifts as wise (wo)men and their powers of vision and healing. Each Elder had his/her own rituals and gifts, and these differences were acknowledged and respected. Well established guidelines dictated how Elders and Medicine people could be approached for prayers, guidance, healing and support. Elders and Medicine people acted as role models in Native culture. Their spiritual connection to *"Manitowa(h)"*,was conveyed through their day-by-day practice of the Native way of life: *"Meo Matsuin"*, and commitment to work on behalf of *"Manitowa(h)"*.

Traditional Teachings

Traditional teachings passed on by the Elders and *"Shaman"* (Medicine people) were based on behaviors that proved successful in maintaining the integrity of the community and the individual. All individuals within the circle of mankind were to be accorded respect. Harmony, respect, humility and generosity were considered to be the core of traditional teachings.

The Native culture, unlike western philosophical approaches, was based on a fundamental concept of goodness. Individuals were born guilt free with no conscience nor standards of conduct and responsibility. The society relied on a tradition of dignity, reciprocal obligations and mutual respect. If the conduct of an individual fell below what was acceptable, he experienced the "shame" of his unacceptable behavior. He lost face and his status within the community was diminished.

Being generous and sharing all that you have generated respect from the rest of the community. One received in order that one might give to others from one's bounty. One accumulated possessions only to share with others that were more needy, or as a sign of respect. "Offerings" presented to the Elder at sweat lodge ceremonies, or the "giveaway" at memorial round dances are contemporary examples of this practice.

Cooperation and sharing with others was a primary focus in the Native way of life. Help was offered to those in need. Obligations and reciprocity ensured the survival of the group. The attachments between the individual, and their family and community generated a sense of personal worth and identity.

The lifestyle of Native people revolved around the here and now rather than the future. Time was always found to do that which was necessary. What cannot be accomplished today, can be accomplished another time. One enjoyed life in the present and flowed with it. The dawning of each day provided a renewed opportunity to reconnect spirituality with *"Manitowa (h)"*. However, commitments to special cultural and spiritual activities such as visits with Elders, sweat lodge ceremonies, and the Sun Dance took precedence over every day activities. Communal gatherings occurred when the "time was right". Time was not judged in mechanical dimensions but was seen in terms of "social process" time. (Rodgers, 1973).

Ethical Principles

The ethical principles which operated in Native communities essentially formed a code of conduct in traditional times. These principles, to a greater or lesser extent, are the underlying value structure of Native communities today. However, these principles are so fundamental to the Native way of thinking, that this underlying framework of Native communities is implicitly but not explicitly understood. These ethical principles included: the ethic of non-interference, the ethic that anger not be shown, the ethic respecting praise and gratitude, the conservation-withdrawal ethic and the ethic that the time must be right (Ross, 1992).

As Brant reported, "The Ethic of Non-Interference is probably one of the oldest and one of the most pervasive of all the ethics by which we Native people live" (cited in Ross, 1992, p. 12). Wax also supported this view by suggesting that non-interference meant that an Aboriginal person would never "interfere in any way with the rights, privileges and activities of others" (cited in Ross, 1992, p. 12). Sometimes the activities in which others engaged were essentially self-destructive. Deciding if interference is warranted continues to create an ethical dilemma. Often their right to learn by experience is respected.

The ethic that anger not be shown was functional in traditional times. Not only anger, but other powerful emotions such as grief and sorrow were suppressed. Individual expression was sacrificed in order to maintain the group solidarity needed in order to accomplish day to day tasks that ensured that basic needs such as food and shelter were met. In the close knit quarters in which extended families lived and worked together, it was necessary to practice restraint. Survival of the group and its members depended upon maintaining harmony and cooperation.

In Native culture, praise and gratitude were indirectly expressed. For example, if you were requested to "make some more bannock", you were being told that you are appreciated. Sharing your best efforts with others might have determined whether or

not the group survived. Not doing so was unheard of. Therefore, every effort was made to do your best as there might be no second chances.

The conservation-withdrawal tactic was used in times of danger and stress. Mentally preparing yourself by considering all possible alternatives before committing yourself to action ensured the best outcome in a stressful situation. Slowing down, withdrawing and conserving your strength while considering the range of possible alternatives was a survival strategy that worked effectively in the bush. These same tactics have been used in other unfamiliar, threatening situations as a survival mechanism. Withdrawing into oneself and assessing ones' resources in a stressful situation, such as incarceration, is an example of the conservation-withdrawal ethic.

In order to survive in the harsh realities of the Canadian landscape, timing was all important. Stalking a deer or approaching a Medicine (wo) man must be done when one was mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually prepared, for optimum opportunities were often rare. If things were attempted at the right time under the right conditions, success was at hand. Therefore, reflecting on and acting at the "right time" was very important. Thus, the notion that the time must be right pervaded the Native way.

The ethical principles discussed above are in essence, the underlying value system of Native culture. These cultural prohibitions enable us to begin to understand the responses of Native people: in not interfering with the actions of others, in suppressing emotions such as anger, grief and sorrow, in not directly expressing praise or gratitude, in withdrawing in unfamiliar or threatening situations, and in responding to the 9-5 work ethic. Countless generations have relied on these ethical principles to survive. However, underlying these ethical guidelines was the philosophy that, according to Native leaders, "spiritual concerns are, and always were, central to Native life " (Ross, 1992, p. 48).

In concluding the section on Native culture and tradition, I must apologize if I have offended anyone in my interpretation of Native ways. I have used a number of sources, (Bigfoot-Sipes, 1991; Lightning, 1992; McCree, 1994; Ross, 1992; Stuart, 1984). I can only offer my interpretation of a variety of sources that refer to Native tradition and culture. According to the Native cultural heritage, oral traditions passed in a culturally respectful manner are sacred. Some of these are not to be shared in narrative form. Therefore, the cultural practices described are only approximations. They may not necessarily be the same for different Aboriginal nations. Although Native peoples share similar world views, different tribes, (Cree, Ojibway, Sioux) may differ in their practice of Native culture and tradition.

Cultural and Ethnic Identity

The above discussion emphasized the fundamental values and beliefs of Native culture. However, it is erroneous to assume that the connections of Aboriginal peoples to their culture have not become fragmented (Bigfoot-Sipes, 1992). For instance, some Native peoples have enjoyed a close connection to their Native heritage, others have maintained fragments of their cultural connection, whereas still others have little knowledge of the traditional teachings. In fact, for some Native people, their first positive connection to Native culture and identity was developed in institutions such as schools, universities and prisons.

Achieving a sense of cultural or ethnic identity helped Native people to develop a sense of self-worth, continuity and stability in their lives. Dealing with negative stereotypes, combined with conflicting norms and values of their own minority culture and that of the dominant culture often generated conflicts. Resolving these conflicts was accomplished in a number of ways. For instance, some Natives remained alienated or marginalized in society by neither accepting their own culture nor the culture of dominant society. Others chose to assimilate and thereby become part of the dominant culture by rejecting their own. Another choice was to withdraw and separate

themselves from the dominant culture while maintaining close ties with their own cultural heritage. Still another alternative, integration/biculturalism, occurred when Aboriginal people retained their culture and adapted when necessary to the dominant culture (Tajfel, 1978). However, just as some Aboriginal peoples have been described as maintaining different degrees of their cultural heritage and tradition, it is similarly understandable that they may also choose different strategies for expressing their Native identity.

The process of coming to terms with their ethnic identity as Native peoples has been studied by a number of authors in cross-cultural contexts (Marcia, 1966; Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney & Tarver, 1988; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). The concept of stages was developed by Marcia (1966) and researched in a cross cultural context by Phinney and others (1988, 1989, 1990). In the initial stage, diffusion/foreclosure; identity was not perceived as an issue and had not been explored. In the second stage, moratorium; there was increasing awareness and concern about their identity as Natives. In the final stage, achievement; they accepted their cultural roots as Native peoples (Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990). Achieving a stable cultural identity may enable Native offenders to operate more successfully in a bicultural or multicultural Canadian context.

Creating a cultural profile of Aboriginal Canadians would be misleading without an acknowledgment that Native peoples throughout Canada are by no means a homogeneous population. For example, there are approximately 573 recognized Indians Bands. Members of these bands speak languages representing at least eleven different language families and inhabit seven delineated cultural areas across Canada (Griffiths & Yerbury, 1983). In Alberta, there are 43 registered Indian bands, 92 recognized reserves and 8 Metis settlements (Cawsey, 1991, p. 8-9). However, commonalties of cultural and ethnic identity shared amongst Aboriginal peoples such as their holistic world view, traditional teachings and fundamental ethical principles such

as non-interference, non-competitiveness, emotional restraint and sharing (Brant, 1990; Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; Ross, 1992) are more binding than their differences. Nevertheless, meeting the needs of Aboriginal offenders, as a segment of Aboriginal society, must recognize that all Aboriginals do not necessarily share the same degree of connectedness to their traditional heritage. Furthermore, regional, cultural and individual differences must be respected in the design of programs and services, if they are to be perceived as culturally sensitive to the Aboriginal way of life: *"Meo Matsuin"* (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; Zellerer, 1992).

Community and Personal Context

In traditional times, the extended family was the backbone of the nomadic Cree communities in Alberta. Often, extended families traveled independently throughout the three seasons of the year, gathering together with other community members during the summer for celebrations, feasts, ceremonies and rituals. Consequently, the traditional structure of the Native community allowed for close knit connections but also respected the need for both separateness, and space.

The Kinship Structure

The Native family composition included grandparents, parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins and often others, who had been "adopted" by family members. This structure is an adaptation of the extended family form. Within the extended family unit, children were accorded the same respect as other family members. As the adults of the community were primarily engaged in economic activities, child rearing became the responsibility of grandparents and community Elders (Attneave, 1982). Consequently, the bonds between children and aged community members were strong. The knowledge and wisdom of grandparents and Elders was transmitted directly to the children. They learned by a process of "watch-then-do, listen-then-do and think-then-do" (More, 1987, p. 26). For example, Elders and grandparents would show the children how to make a bear trap, then tell them stories about the significance of the

bear in Native culture and finally, over time, allowed the learners time to reflect on how to integrate this new knowledge into everyday life. Elders shared traditional knowledge throughout the life journey of the individual. The storytelling and sharing varied according to the stage of readiness of the learner.

Inappropriate behavior by the individual was discouraged through family and community pressure that included the use of shaming, teasing, and shunning. On behalf of the community, Elders undertook the responsibility of regular teaching of community values and warned those who were uncooperative. They often used the oral tradition of storytelling to communicate their message in a non-threatening manner. When necessary, they publicly banished individuals who created disturbances. More serious misdemeanors were dealt with by Elders through a process of mediation and reconciliation between offenders and victims. The healing of wounds was a significant part of this process. The objective was not to determine guilt, but to settle disputes (Ross, 1992). Shared spiritual practices, mutual obligations and responsibilities deemed appropriate in the kinship arrangements acted as a cohesive force in the community. Thus, Elders, with the cooperation of the extended family and the community, ensured the restoration of cooperation, balance and harmony within the community following the censure of unacceptable behavior.

As a consequence of this cooperative education, the individual in Native culture, grew up with a well established understanding of the responsibilities and expectations of his/her extended family and community. He/she was guided by the Native world view, traditional teachings, and ethical principles. Boundaries that were violated resulted in consequences imposed by community Elders. Although the individual might have been "shamed" or "lost face" in the community, he/she was given the opportunity to compensate the victim for his/her unacceptable behavior. However, once the arrangements between offender and victim had been formalized, the community sought to regain a sense of harmony and balance as quickly as possible.

The close knit Native extended families were influenced by educational, social and economic dynamics both inside and outside the community.

The Economic Impact

To make way for white settlement, Native peoples of the Plains were restricted to reserve areas. They were segregated in their own communities. Providing a minimal level of economic subsistence for their families within the narrow confines of the reserve setting became increasingly difficult. Relying on traditional economic pursuits such as fishing and hunting buffalo as a primary form of sustenance was no longer possible. Native people lost their control over their economy.

In addition, economic dependence, fostered by a lack of attention to the economic development of lands reserved for Indians, and external political control by the introduction of Indian agents, was predicated on the assumption that Native peoples were inferior "savages", incapable of developing their lands and resources (Frideres, 1974). As Manuel (1980), a B. C. Native spokesperson, suggested: "seizure of Indian lands and the banishment of the conquered to reserves could be justified by an ideology that saw Natives as savage and uncivilized. If they were subhuman, then their lives were not as valuable as European lives and their property need not be valued in the same way" (cited in Kellough, 1980, p. 360). These attitudes reflected a total disregard for Indigenous people, their traditional economy and lifestyle, and perpetuated the colonialist agenda of assimilation and protection. Eventually, the degree of control that Native people were able to exercise over their own lives was further reduced. These travesties set in motion a cycle of powerlessness and dependency on government institutions that continues to influence Aboriginal peoples. Instead of encouraging Natives to compete for employment in mainstream society, control of the economic, political and social systems by the dominant segment of society discouraged them from full participation in either the Native or non-Native community.

Fragmentation of the Kinship System

Over the last two hundred and fifty years, the roles of individuals and families in the community have been significantly altered. The loss of the traditional economy was followed by the loss of the traditional male role as provider and protector (Van Bibber, 1985). For some individuals, the losses extended to male role models and their Native identity. Chief Alice Cook of the Grand Rapids Indian Band states that: "Men can't make enough money hunting, trapping and fishing to keep their families. They can't play their traditional role as provider and they sit around in small, crowded houses" (cited in Van Bibber, 1985).

The residential school experience only exacerbated the loss of roles of individuals and families in the community. As a means of ensuring that the process of assimilation continued unabated, Native children were forcibly taken away from their families and compelled to attend residential schools for at least ten months of the year. Contact with their parents was minimal and "the teachers acknowledged neither Indian language nor culture. . . Whatever the issue, the placement of a school, the amount of school holidays, the needs of the children, the opinions of Indian parents were discounted" (Kellough, 1980, p. 363).

Although both genders attended residential schools, males may have been more affected than females by their experiences. The role expectations that stressed homemaking for females was similar in both the Native and non-Native cultures. However, males in the residential school were not taught skills that were meaningful or useful in the reserve communities on the plains. For some, the residential schools interrupted the flow of family, community and culture. At the other end of the spectrum, for others, the residential school experiences continue to influence their sense of personal worth and identity. Richard Cardinal, a Native who eventually took his own life, described his experience of residential schools. Residential schools "alienated

the child from his own family, they alienated him from his own way of life without in any way preparing him for a different society" (cited in Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991).

Role conflict and strain is generated when the disparity between the desired role (provider and protector), and the achievable role (powerless and vulnerable) could not be bridged. Rather than the entire extended family cooperating in a collective enterprise, with well established mutually satisfying roles, those remaining on the reserve were forced to eke out a meager existence with unreliable or seasonal laboring jobs for the men and regular welfare payments for the women. The unequal access of males and females to opportunities that would provide economic stability created another source of conflict in the community. The cohesive extended family unit that enabled individuals in the community to feel worthwhile became fragmented. As one author suggested, "where the Native economy has been weakened, the family suffers as an institution. In these situations, there was an alarming degree of alcohol and drug abuse, violent deaths, petty crime, child neglect and family breakdown" (Usher, 1980, p. 8).

The breakdown of traditional values resulting from the social and economic erosion of the Native way of life has created for many Native people "a loss of power and status not only in relation to the dominant society but within Aboriginal society as well" (LaPrairie, 1987, p. 126). Social disorganization in the community and interpersonal tension amongst families and individuals resulted from the loss of traditional values and roles, as well as colonization and oppression that were mentioned earlier. The frustration experienced by males oftentimes exploded into violence and aggression towards their extended family members. The communities have attempted to absorb the dysfunctional behavior occurring in the community. However, this was only a stop gap measure, due to the scarcity of resources and support services (LaPrairie, 1992). In a submission to the Federal Provincial Task Force on Victims of Crime, the Native Counselling Service of Alberta, (NCSA), reasserted the need for

support services for families because "In most Native communities, the interrelationships between families are very close: the total population is small and the number of children in each family tends to be large. As a result, a great many crimes involve family members of either victims or offenders" (NCSA, 1982, p 18). However, implementing these services was difficult because of the widespread dysfunction in some communities.

Cultural fragmentation inhibits the maintenance of harmony and balance within the community and its members. In the process of establishing a sense of self worth and identity as an Aboriginal person,

> "Understandings of life are often developed in relation to the aspects and cycles of nature. The cycle of nature, and life, is a circle, without beginning and without end. While individuals are unique beings, to try and understand them separate from these aspects and cycles is to isolate them from a large part of who they are. When such intactness is broken, it becomes difficult for the individual to live in harmony with the people and things around them. Much of who they are is, in a sense, lost. As people lose their cohesion with their world, they also lose touch with themselves; as they are in disharmony with their world, so they are in disharmony with themselves. They may dislike their world and themselves and act accordingly" (Pepper & Henry, 1991, p. 145)

The social disorganization and interpersonal tension experienced in the community lead to feelings of powerlessness and alienation from the self, and resulted in violence and aggression which eventually lead to involvement with the criminal justice system.

Societal and Criminal Justice Context

Canada has often been described as a multicultural society that fosters pride in one's heritage. Nevertheless, class, and racial barriers continue to exist despite legislation to the contrary that promotes tolerance, equality and the acceptance of difference (The Constitutional Act, 1982). As a group, Aboriginal Canadians have experienced both indirect and direct discrimination based on socio-economic class and racial stereotypes. According to the Aboriginal Peoples Survey, they have the distinction of being the ethnic group with the lowest socioeconomic status (Statistics Canada, 1993) and existing on the margins of Canadian society.

Social Environment

A limited number of academic scholars have described the social environment of Native offenders (McCaskill, 1985; Murphy, 1991; Nielsen, 1990; Silverman & Nielsen, 1992). Chief Dennis Shorting, briefly summarizes a Native view of the impact of socio-economic factors on communities, families and individuals:

> So we find ourselves in the fertile breeding grounds of crime: high unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, substandard housing, inadequate health care, tradition, hunting, fishing and trapping rights being violated, a shortage of recreation facilities and being subject to the law and which many times we don't understand, laws which do not fit with our culture, values and traditions (cited in Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991, p. 91-92)

Pressure continues to be exerted on Native peoples to adopt the value and belief system of mainstream Euro-Canadians. Consequently, both collectively and individually, Native peoples have experienced both direct and indirect discrimination in Canadian society. The nature of the experiences of male Native offenders cannot be discussed without considering their lived experience of oppression in Canadian society.

Overt Discrimination in Canadian Society

Overt or direct discrimination is defined as that which is "open and deliberate and intended to be discriminatory" (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991, p. 100). For example, often the cultural practices of Native peoples are not respected by the dominant society. Often, Aboriginals employed in the work force are discouraged or prevented from attending ceremonies and rituals as the time frame of Native ceremonies does not fit with the cultural practices of non-Native society. Social, racial, cultural and class based discrimination has influenced the sense of worth and personal identity of individuals, families and communities of the Aboriginal nation.

Systemic Discrimination in the Criminal Justice System

A number of studies (Cawsey, 1991; Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; Havemann, 1988; Morse & Lock, 1988) have commented on the existence of indirect or systemic discrimination in Canadian society, in general, and the criminal justice system, in

particular. Hamilton and Sinclair, (1991, p. 100), define such discrimination as situations, "where the application of a standard or criterion, or the use of a 'standard practice', creates an adverse impact upon an identifiable group that is not consciously intended".

Although the intent of the criminal justice system is to treat individuals in an equal manner, in practice, many laws and policies discriminate against Aboriginal peoples. The laws and policies were developed by representatives of Canadian society that have little understanding of Native culture. The concepts of crime and justice differ in the Native world view. The Aboriginal community seeks to enhance harmony within the community and resolve personal antagonism and conflicts through restitution. The Canadian justice system is confrontational and rests on punitive rather than restitutive sanctions (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991).

Frequently, Aboriginals may be disadvantaged by their lack of education and inability to communicate in the courtroom. For instance, translation services for Aboriginal people are often non-existent or inadequate. Furthermore, their low socio-economic status may lead to incarceration for the non-payment of fines rather than given time to pay or community service orders. Although the Court may exercise discretionary decision making, seldom are Natives with numerous alcohol related offences given the opportunity to attend treatment programs in the community rather than being incarcerated. Depending on the nature of the crime, and length of the sentence, Aboriginals may not have access to programs that are culturally sensitive and enable them to reflect on and reformulate their world view (Cawsey, 1991).

Pluralism

Over the past ten years, awareness and concern about the conditions and treatment of Aboriginal Canadians has stimulated reactions to issues surrounding Native offenders (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988). Both Native groups and critical theorists have helped to change the public perception from being an "Indian problem" of (in)

subordination into a "white problem" of (over) domination. In this climate of change, pluralism becomes an alternative policy direction (Reasons, 1975; Verdun-Jones & Muirhead, 1979/80).

The Canadian parliament has passed legislation (Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms: Constitution Act, 1982) that guarantees the rights of Canadians to equality before the law. However, at the policy level, a corresponding shift from assimilation to pluralism is long overdue. Whereas assimilation encourages ethnic groups to lose their sense of separate identity within mainstream society, pluralism recognizes the right of Native people to maintain their separateness as a distinct group. An acknowledgment of the inherent validity and worth of the Native way of viewing the world is possible in a pluralistic approach.

Pluralism recognizes the dual influences of colonization and oppression upon Native peoples. From the perspective of pluralism, the criminal justice system is perceived as an institution of social control designed to reinforce the cultural values, social norms and economic system of the dominant society. Rather than blaming the individual offender, the subjugation and exploitation practiced by the dominant society is acknowledged as contributing factors to criminal involvement and recidivism. Consequently, the over representation of racial and ethnic minorities, Aboriginal peoples, in the criminal justice system becomes more understandable.

Although Aboriginal people must function within the dominant society, their own belief, value system and culture can provide them with a stable framework which will enable them to explore their strengths and self-defeating behaviors as well as develop new insights into the domination and exploitation of mainstream society. Developing a new way of perceiving their individual and collective identity in Canadian society will enable them to more successfully co-exist in a bicultural society (Harrison, 1990). Being flexible and adapting to change has ensured the survival of Native culture. "When people change, they do not necessarily lose their identities. People are

flexible, adaptive and creative. Culture is what people do together. It is a living, recreative process" (La Rocque, 1993, p. 4).

Research Context

Thus far, the historical and cultural context, the community and individual context, and the societal and criminal justice context have been described. A review of the research that relates to Native offenders further clarifies the purpose and rationale of the study. Before proceeding to examine the experiences of Native offenders in the correctional and program context, the research context will be discussed.

Research in Corrections

Most of the research on Native offenders has been conducted under the auspices of the federal Solicitor General and this departments' counterpart at the provincial level. The literature generated through this source on Native offenders is rather limited in scope. Research studies that have been commissioned on behalf of the government have mainly focused on quantitative rather than qualitative data (Morse & Lock, 1988; Zellerer, 1992).

From 1967 to the early 1990's, a total of twenty five government funded or sponsored reports were commissioned to document the relationship of Native offenders to the criminal justice system (Nielsen, 1992). For example, some of the significant studies, The Task Force on Aboriginal Peoples (1988), Justice on Trial: Report of the Task Force on the Criminal Justice System and its Impact on the Indian and Metis People of Alberta (1991), Locking up Natives in Canada (1989), and the Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba: The Justice System and Aboriginal People (1991), have similarly reported the overrepresentation of Native offenders in the criminal justice system (Nielsen, 1990).

Through these reports, a statistical profile of Aboriginal Canadians in the justice system has been created but the patterns have not been explained. The unexplained nature of factual data on male Native offenders was illustrated by the following excerpt

paraphrased from The Final Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Peoples in Federal Corrections (1988). In the Prairie region (comprising Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba), 47.1% of Native offenders were granted either day parole or full parole compared to 53.1% of non-Native offenders in the same categories. Although there is little disparity between these figures, the rationale for quoting these figures is the discussion in The Task Force Report (1988). The analysis of these figures in the report suggests that "Aboriginal offenders either forego their right to be considered for parole or there may be differences in the likelihood of being granted parole" (Final Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Peoples in Federal Corrections, 1988, p. 29). Figures are quoted, then conclusions are drawn from statistical data. However, seldom have the perceptions of Native offenders themselves been documented so that a more comprehensive analysis of the contributing factors may be explored. Thus, it appears that the Final Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Peoples in Federal Corrections suggested tentative reasons for the quantitative data but further research that specifically describes and/or explains how the different experiences and outcomes of Natives and non-Natives have developed was not considered.

The profile of Native offenders has primarily been developed from studies commissioned by the Corrections branch of the criminal justice system. Although some of these reports have documented the views of individual offenders, representatives of the Native community and those involved in the networks of the criminal justice system, little systematic research has explored the experience of Native offenders (Morse & Lock, 1988; Waldram, 1992; Zellerer, 1992). Specific data on the involvement of Native offenders in the programs and services of federal and provincial institutions provided by the Correctional Services of Canada is largely unavailable (Zellerer, 1992).

Research by Native Organizations and Criminal Justice Agencies

Native organizations and criminal justice agencies such as Native Counselling Services of Alberta and The John Howard Society have also contributed their perspectives to the body of research on Natives and the criminal justice system (Berzins, McCord, Scott, Somers & Theriault, 1991; Native Counselling Services, 1981, 1982; Nielsen, 1990). Both Native Counselling Services of Alberta and The John Howard Society have functioned as advocates on behalf of Native offenders. Nevertheless, these agencies have primarily compiled statistical data on incarceration, as this information is the most easily accessible (Nielsen, 1992). However, even this data is incomplete. For example, gathering socio-demographic data, on topics such as early release (parole and mandatory supervision), is sometimes difficult to analyze due to different definitions and data-collection techniques between agencies (Frideres, 1988).

Criminal Theories and Native Offenders

Many theories have been proposed to account for the overrepresentation of Aboriginal peoples in the criminal justice system. However, just as many different conclusions have been reached, often based on widely different interpretations of the same data (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; LaPrairie, 1992; McCaskill, 1985). Explanations ranged from suggesting that the responsibility lies with the individual to attributing criminality to social factors. A Native lawyer, Ovide Mercredi comments:

> If you accept our assertion that much of the root cause of Indian peoples' disproportionate conflict with the justice system lies in their poverty and marginal position in Canadian society, then what do you think is going to happen in the next 10 or 20 years, if radical changes do not occur? (cited in Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991, p. 90)

The poverty and marginal position of Native people in Canadian society cannot be overlooked when attempting to understand the relationship between Aboriginal people and their over representation in the courts and penal institutions of Canada. A number of authors (Dyck, 1990; Hamilton & Sinclair; Hyde & LaPrairie; 1987;

Minore, 1989) suggest that the breakdown of cultural values, community cohesion and family fragmentation have also contributed to a sense of injustice, frustration, despair, dependency and hopelessness on the part of Aboriginal people. Currently, due to the high birth rate among Native people and the declining birth rate among other Canadians, significant numbers of Native youth will be entering the "at risk" age group. These trends are expected to continue unless the pattern is interrupted (Perreault, Paquette & George, 1985). Therefore, addressing the root causes of the overrepresentation of Aboriginals in the criminal justice system and their marginalization in Canadian society can no longer be dismissed nor postponed. Over the next twenty years, program design and implementation must consider the social and economic realities of Native people.

A few of the theoretical models that address the issues described above are described in the paragraphs to follow. One theoretical model, has been reformulated by LaPrairie (1987). Based on social psychological theory, it explored both the individual and group dynamics that influence behavior. The author suggested that the breakdown of traditional values resulting from the social and economic erosion of the Indian way of life has created for many Indian people a loss of power and status, not only in relation to the dominant society, but within Indian society as well. Where Native traditions have been eroded or eradicated, traditional roles and status, particularly for Indian males, have been lost. Role loss has resulted in social disorganization in many Native communities. In addition, it has contributed to the erosion of the family unit and has generated hostility and aggression among family members. Social disorganization and violence directed against oneself, one's family members, and powerless others, are the result of internalized aggression following the demise of traditional roles and functions. Furthermore, "role loss and role conflict, primarily for Aboriginal males, has been the outcome of colonization and assimilation practices which have eroded the traditional economies and the traditional way of life" (LaPrairie, 1987, p. 134). As a

consequence, the socio-economic inequalities coupled with role loss have led to social disorganization and interpersonal tensions whose violent expression within the Native community has resulted in the over-representation of Natives in the criminal justice system.

Another theoretical model proposed by Morrisette, MacKenzie & Morrisette (1993) has been developed using an empowerment framework which suggests that oppressed peoples need to explore the both the personal and societal context of their self-defeating behaviors in order to regain a sense of self-worth. Reframing their world view will enable them to empower themselves and their community. Morrisette, MacKenzie & Morrisette suggested that in order for Aboriginals to cope successfully in a bicultural environment, they must regain a sense of their identity and self worth as Aboriginal peoples. Recognizing a distinct Aboriginal world view, developing Aboriginal consciousness about the impact of colonialism, and reconnecting with their cultural knowledge and traditions are seen as preliminary steps to empowering themselves and their communities. This model enables Aboriginals to reflect on their self-defeating behaviors resulting from the oppression they have experienced as a subordinate group in the dominant society. By developing cultural consciousness that promotes self-identity within a meaningful cultural context, Aboriginal peoples will be able to distinguish between personal responsibility and structural impediments perpetuated through societal inequalities. Developing critical consciousness about inequality, social support to overcome self-blame and regaining their sense of power to effect change will enable more Aboriginal offenders to choose lifestyles that help them to make more successful transitions to the community. A greater awareness that their perceptions and experiences are shared by other Natives will further enhance the empowerment process.

The Emic Perspective

As mentioned earlier, a few government funded reports (Cawsey, 1991; Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; Morse & Lock, 1988) have taken into account the personal perspectives of Native offenders. The study by Morse & Lock (1988) combined both quantitative and qualitative data in presenting the views of inmates and parolees on the criminal justice system. Using personal interviews, group discussions and questionnaires, Morse & Lock (1988) reported that Native offenders strongly perceive a "racial disparity" in their sentences (54%), and their treatment by institutional staff (60%), compared to non-Natives. The residents also expressed a strong preference for Native self-help groups (64%), as opposed to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA); even though subjective responses in the group discussions indicated that AA is more favored by the institutions. Therefore, it is not surprising that Native offenders also felt that participating in AA was also perceived more favorably in parole board hearings. However, the Native inmates suggested that the Native Brotherhood should receive more recognition that it does in providing support and developing programs. In conclusion, Morse and Lock (1988) stated that "We believe that many Native offenders perceive the justice system as a critical component of the dominant society that is excluding them or rendering them marginal" (Morse & Lock,1988, p. 34).

Two of the Task Forces, chaired by Cawsey (1991) and Hamilton & Sinclair (1991) from Alberta and Manitoba, respectively, are excellent sources of anecdotal reports from those involved with the justice system and members of the Native community. Although the anecdotal evidence in the Task Force reports is an important first step, further research is needed to systematically explore the perceptions of those (e. g. Native families, and community) as well as the incarcerated Natives who are primarily influenced by the relationship between Native offenders and the justice system. An example of one of the submissions follows.

In the Cawsey Report, (1991) some Native offenders strongly suggested that psychiatric assessments are not culturally appropriate nor sensitive to Aboriginal culture and tradition. In order to be considered for early release from the institution into the community, a psychiatric assessment must be completed. Native offenders must undergo the same assessment procedure as non-Native offenders. The Native Brotherhood in the Edmonton Institution described the experience of Aboriginal offenders in the following manner:

> The overall deficiencies and invalidity of the 'professional assessment' made at the Regional Psychiatric Center, (R. P. C.) is the cultural and racial clash of non-Native professionals 'assessing' the mental processes of a Native person with non-Native means. The cultural beliefs and values of a Native differ sharply in contrast to a non-Native and an inevitable outcome is that the non-Native professional will diagnose a certain behavior as 'abnormal' while the behavior itself is perfectly normal in Native culture. The culture and racial contradiction can reflect negatively upon the Native person when appearing before the National Parole Board (Cawsey, 1991, p. 6-14)

It appears that the expectation was that the Native offender should participate in institutional programming such as substance abuse and life skills, regardless of whether or not these programs reflected tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences. Studies indicated that for Native offenders, the transition from the institution to the community at the earliest possible opportunity, may be enhanced by the provision of programs that are culturally sensitive and facilitated by members of the Native community (Morse & Lock, 1988).

A number of authors (Dyck, 1990; Cawsey, 1991; Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; Minore, 1989) have commented on the lack of Aboriginal community involvement in the various aspects of the criminal justice process. As mentioned previously, fewer Native offenders have served a portion of their sentences in the community than have non-Native offenders. At the federal level, only 4% of Native offenders were released after having served 36% of their sentences whereas 16% of non-Natives were released into the community after serving the same portion of their sentences (Hann & Harman, 1986). One proposed justification for these figures was that rarely have Aboriginal

communities supervised Native offenders released from institutions. In spite of geographic distances, minimal resources and training and the small size of communities, a few authors (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; Minore, 1989; NCSA, 1982) have suggested that the possibility of developing community supervision of Native offenders has not been fully explored.

In exploring the literature on Native offenders and the criminal justice system, it appeared that research has been primarily gathered by non-Natives. Therefore, a profile of Native offenders has been developed that remains largely unaddressed by Aboriginal community members sharing the same cultural perspectives (Couture, 1983; McLoyd, 1990). Often, research has been initiated without consultation or involvement by the Aboriginal community in question (Dyck, 1990; Minore, 1989). Designing and implementing research needs to be "controlled by Aboriginal people and involve Aboriginal investigators directly in the identification and interpretation of findings" (Morrisette, MacKenzie & Morrisette, 1993, p. 106). As a consequence, the Aboriginal community will be finally acknowledged as the 'experts' in describing and explaining their own experiences.

The Correctional and Program Context

The Constitution or B. N. A. Act (1867) was the legislation that established the parameters for the criminal justice system in Canada. Enacting laws and criminal procedures to be followed in criminal matters was the responsibility of the federal government (B.N.A. Act, Section 91). Provincial governments have the responsibility of the administration of justice (B.N.A. Act, Section 92), as well as enacting provincial legislation that applies to provincial offenders.

However, both the federal and provincial levels of government share the responsibility for providing correctional services. The jurisdiction of the federal government included those individuals who were serving a sentence of two years or more. Sentences of up to two years less a day are served in provincial institutions. In

practice, shared responsibility for corrections impedes efficiency and service delivery by creating dual and overlapping responsibilities for the management of programs and services (Task Force on Program Review, n.d.).

Demographic Profile of Canadian Native Offenders

In general, Natives are overrepresented in all areas of the criminal justice system ranging from their initial involvement with the police force, sentencing and the court system, to the correctional system including incarceration, programs and services, and recidivism.

The demographic profile revealed that although Aboriginal people make up only 2% of Canada's total population, they make up about 10% of the male federal inmate population and 13% of the female federal inmate population (Nielsen, 1991). And, the proportions of Native offenders were higher in provincial institutions, particularly in the Prairie provinces (Correctional Law Review, 1988). Aboriginal people incarcerated in provincial institutions in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba comprised 64% of all incarcerated Native people in 1987-88, although Native people in these provinces comprise only 37% of the total Aboriginal population (Loh, 1990). In Alberta, registered Indians comprise only 32% of the total Aboriginal population (Census 1986) but this group comprised 58% of the 1989 provincial correctional population (Cawsey, 1991).

The Correctional Services of Canada and its counterpart in Alberta, the Attorney General's Department, are responsible for documenting the movements of the inmate population. For instance, according to the federal Correctional Services of Canada Offender Population Forecast, 1987-88 to 1994-95, the percentage growth of the Native inmate population in 1986-87 was 3.5% whereas the percentage growth of the non-Native inmate population percentage growth of the non-Native inmate population was -1.3%, at the federal level. Other statistical information compiled by the Correctional Service of Canada Offender Information System included the rates of

incarceration and recidivism (as above) of Native inmates, the rates of those serving sentences in the institution and/or the community, and rates of participation of Natives in institutional programming.

The statistical data compiled by the Correctional Service of Canada Offender Information System was broken down by regions: the Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies (comprising Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) and the Pacific. Consequently, obtaining information on federal inmates from a specific provincial jurisdiction was difficult. Another factor which created difficulty in interpreting statistical data is that exchange agreements sometimes allow federal/provincial inmates to serve their sentences in their province of origin, these offenders may or may not be included in either the provincial or federal data banks.

Policies and Programs in the 1970's

Prior to 1965, there were few programs or services provided by correctional institutions that focused on specifically rehabilitating Native offenders (Canadian Corrections Association, 1967). Throughout this period, Native offenders were categorized by prison authorities and security personnel as "model prisoners". Essentially, they "did their time" and made few demands within the system. The prevalent attitude was that Native inmates needed to learn how to control their alcohol consumption and how to successfully assimilate themselves into the middle class value system of Canadian society in order to make the transition from the institution to the community (Nielsen, 1990).

Policies and program guidelines that have been introduced by the Correctional Services of Canada in the mid 1970's began to reflect changing trends both inside and outside the criminal justice system. The development of Native Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods in the institutional setting provided a focus for Aboriginal cultural and spiritual activities. These organizations were run by Native residents with the assistance of criminal justice agencies outside the institution. The high rate of

participation in these self-help groups as opposed to the low rate of participation by Natives in other programs (McCaskill, 1985) has not gone unnoticed. For example, various government task forces (Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General, 1988; Task Force on Aboriginal Peoples, 1988) recognized that being involved and committed to the Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood organizations was an indication that the Native offender had begun the process of rehabilitation. These organizations enabled Native inmates to foster a sense of self-respect and pride in their Native heritage. In fact, these self-help groups paralleled the cultural consciousness developing in Native communities outside the institutions.

Native inmates are seldom perceived by prison officials as "model prisoners" any longer (Correctional Law Review, 1988). Native offenders now have a higher profile and are more actively involved in the institutional setting. Moreover, the "existence of a noticeably large racial minority from a different and underprivileged background (culture) within a prison system has traditionally been a source of tension and security risk" (Newby, 1981, p. 39). However, from the perspective of Native inmates, "the policies continue to be designed and implemented by non-Natives yet intended for Natives. Management is for the most part non-Native; classification officers are non-Native; living unit officers and security staff are all non-Native. In addition, most of the non-Native staff are unaware of and possibly unsympathetic toward Native culture. These factors all contribute towards polarization between Native and non-Natives inmates in the institutions" (Morse & Lock, 1988, p. 54).

At the beginning of the 1980's, a number of new initiatives were introduced by the Correctional Services of Canada. For instance, the federal Department of the Solicitor-General declared that policies and programs designated for Native peoples were one of seven major areas for policy change. The policy objectives, relating to Native offenders, included: "to reduce the number of imprisoned Natives; to increase the number of Native staff employed in the criminal justice system; to establish more

Native consultation in policy-making; to respond to Native policing, institutional and aftercare needs; and to encourage improved federal/provincial coordination" (Newby, 1981, p. 13). However, the implementation of these policy changes has been characterized by a lack of consistency and coordination between institutions and the federal and provincial governments (Cawsey, 1991; Zellerer, 1992).

Program and Policy Implementation

Griffiths (1994) has studied the correctional policy guidelines. According to this author, the implementation of programs and services for Native offenders is a priority, but nevertheless been curtailed due to fiscal restraint. However, other authors, (Newby, 1981; Zellerer, 1992) claim that the changing policy and programs proposed by the correctional system for Native offenders is merely window dressing. These authors suggest that, in fact, the policy implementation is "uncoordinated, haphazard and reactive" (Newby, 1981, p. 35). Proposing alternatives to the overrepresentation of Native peoples based on the relationship between the criminal justice system, socio-demographic conditions and Native peoples has spanned over three decades. The recommendations proposed by these studies are similar but their implementation is a "matter for debate" (Nielsen, 1992, p. 3). Hence, paternalism and control of Native offenders continues to be instrumental in the development of government policy initiatives (Frideres, 1988; McCaskill, 1985).

The plethora of task forces and reports has highlighted the overrepresentation of Native offenders in the criminal justice system. In 1988, four government initiated or funded reports, (Correctional Law Review, 1988; Jackson, 1989; Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General, 1988; The Task Force on Aboriginal Offenders, 1988) dealt directly with the provision of programs and services for Native inmates.

As a result of these reports, Corrections Canada now acknowledges in its mission statement that: "We respect the dignity of individuals, the rights of all members of society, and the potential for human growth and development" (Solicitor General

Canada, 1988, p. 8). In addition, one of the Commissioner's Directives, (#702), was expanded to state that the "needs of Native offenders should be clarified and met" (Solicitor General Canada, 1988, p. 49). Contrary to the statement contained in the Commissioner's Directives, the cultural differences of Native offenders are not being fully respected. For instance, an Alberta survey found that 81% of Aboriginal inmates felt that their spiritual needs were not recognized (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991). While the assessment of Native correctional programs and services are limited (Zellerer, 1992), a number of researchers would agree that currently available programs and services designed for Native offenders are not culturally sensitive (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; Minore, 1992; Zellerer, 1992).

Evaluation of Policies and Programs

The evaluation of Native correctional programs and services has been limited (McCaskill, 1985; Morse & Lock; 1988; Zellerer, 1992), especially external evaluations. Some variables have been identified as critical to making changes in one's life, spirituality is one of them. For example, the Cawsey Report (1991) noted the relationship between a commitment to Aboriginal spirituality and making changes in one's life. A clear and consistent message from incarcerated inmates, released inmates, program managers and Elders was received regarding the influence of Native spirituality in re-evaluating one's sense of identity and self worth. They concluded that Aboriginal spirituality was an integral part of those intervention programs which are deemed to be successful (Cawsey, 1991, p. 6-28).

Information on the implementation and evaluation of programs designed for Native offenders throughout the federal and provincial correctional centers needs to be updated and documented (Task Force on Programs, n.d.). A number of studies, (Frideres, 1988; Newby, 1981; Nielsen, 1992) reported that programming was not coordinated. In essence, programming seemed to be out of touch with the needs of Aboriginals returning to an Aboriginal community (Cawsey, 1991). When programs

are designed, Native culture and tradition, as well as available opportunities in the community must be considered.

In some instances, programming needs to be designed that caters to the sentence length of Native offenders. For example, in provincial institutions, the average stay of an Aboriginal inmate is thirty days. Short term programs could be developed that help orient Native offenders to the programs and services available within the community. Otherwise, their most likely alternative is to return to the same lifestyle and environment they left (Edmonton Inner City Crime Task Force, 1990; LaPrairie, 1992).

Other programming needs to be developed that caters to the needs of long term offenders in relation to personal development (i.e., life skills, substance abuse) as well as vocational and educational requirements. Therefore, further research is needed that explores the perceptions and experiences of Native offenders themselves, so that programming that is implemented is based on their perceived needs.

Few of the policies and programs instituted by the Correctional Services of Canada have been evaluated (Nielsen, 1990; Zellerer, 1992). For example, an increasing number of Native staff have been hired by Corrections Canada, Native Liaison Officer positions have been created, Elders have become affiliated with penal institutions, and cross cultural awareness training has been implemented. However, none of these policy guidelines have been assessed (Nielsen, 1990; Zellerer, 1992).

Although these initiatives are commendable, full implementation has been somewhat problematic. For example, although an increasing number of Native staff have been hired, the vacancies they have filled have been positions in which they have little power to influence decision making or program implementation (Cawsey, 1991).

The number of Native liaison officers who have been hired has increased substantially. They have been hired either on a contractual basis, or as correctional staff. Both these avenues can create divisions in the institutions. Comments from the Cawsey Report (1991) indicated that contract workers are sometimes perceived as not

as committed to their positions as other staff, whereas those that are part of the correctional staff are seen as "too bureaucratic" by the Native inmates.

Although Elders are often now employed in correctional institutions, they still do not enjoy the same status or privileges as other religious representatives (e. g. , chaplains) of the dominant religions (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991). In numerous submissions to the Cawsey Report (1991) Native offenders stated that in their experience, submissions from Elders during parole hearings are not granted the same status as those from non-Aboriginal sources.

Although 100% of the government sponsored or funded research has recommended the implementation of specific programs and services that meet the unique needs of Aboriginal offenders, it was difficult to obtain specific information on which institutions currently offer such programming. Variations exist in the effectiveness and availability of programs "between institutions and across jurisdictions" (Solicitor General Canada, 1988, p. 48). However, there does exist an awareness and interest in Native culturally appropriate programming from the perspective of Native offenders. For instance, according to Morse and Lock (1988), the Native Brotherhoods in penal institutions in Alberta have the highest rate (90%) of attendance in Canada.

Native Brotherhood organizations exist in Drumheller Institution, Edmonton Institution, Bowden Institution, Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Institution, Belmont Correctional Institution, Grande Cache Correctional Institution, the Calgary Correctional Center, and the Lethbridge Correctional Center. The administration at the Drumheller Institution are very supportive of their Native Brotherhood and as a consequence, a pilot project that focuses on the needs of Native offenders has been designed, implemented and evaluated (Gwin, 1994). Both Bowden Institution and the Stan Daniels Correctional Center offer Family Life Improvement Programs based on Native tradition and spirituality (Cunningham, C. C., 1994).

The policy directives (Newby, 1981) that were designed to ensure that the needs of Native offenders were clarified and met have not as yet reached their objectives. Consulting with the Native community and successfully integrating Native staff and Elders into the institutions needs to be addressed. Planning, implementing and evaluating culturally sensitive programming needs to be expanded. The commitment at the policy level continues to be left to the discretion of institutional management (Zellerer, 1992). Consequently, the marginalization of Native offenders in the criminal justice system parallels the marginalization that Natives experience in the community (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988; Morrisette, MacKenzie & Morrisette, 1993). Only recently has research begun to examine and clarify the needs of Native offenders from *their* perspective (Morse & Lock, 1988; Waldram, 1992; Waldram, in press). The Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary stated simply that:

> The focus of all housing, programs and services provided (by correctional institutions) shall be to rehabilitate the individuals involved- not merely to incarcerate. (Cawsey, 1991, p. 6-21)

Traditional and Culturally Sensitive Programs

In order to provide clarity in the discussion to follow, a distinction will be made between traditional and culturally sensitive programs. In the programming context in this research study, traditional refers to programs that are designed for the general category of male offender in the correctional system. These programs reflect the dominant cultural view of society as one in which the individual is given the responsibility for his own success. In the dominant culture, an individual is perceived as successful if he is financially self-sufficient, independent of others, and competitive. Traditional programs focus on individual problem behaviors such as substance abuse, and anger management.

In the programming context, culturally sensitive programs are those that recognize that there is more than one definition of reality. Furthermore, programs that are culturally sensitive recognize that the different world views espoused by Natives

and non-Natives need to be acknowledged and respected. For example, in designing culturally sensitive programs for Native offenders, the values of cooperation, obligation, sharing and reciprocity would be addressed rather than the values of competition, autonomy and self-reliance. Programming that is culturally sensitive could be developed using a holistic framework, rather than focusing on the separate components of individual behaviors. Although Aboriginal people must function within a dominant society, their own beliefs, value system and culture can provide them with the underlying framework to enable them to successfully co-exist within a bicultural environment (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan & Buriel, 1990; McShane, 1983; Phinney, Lockner & Murphy, 1990).

Traditional Programs

In spite of the evidence above, some programs and services have been implemented that potentially meet the needs of Native offenders. Federal programs instituted during the 1991-92 fiscal year included life skills, substance abuse and sex offender treatment programs. Pilot projects were implemented that focused on developing life skills. These were intended to change the attitudes of offenders and improve their cognitive skills. Potentially, these life skills programs may reduce the rates of recidivism by helping offenders to readjust to the community. Analysis of the data for high risk offenders indicated that the recidivism rate for the control group (42%) was over twice as high as the rate in the treatment group (18%). However, data were unavailable on Aboriginal offenders. Initiatives undertaken to meet the specific needs of Native offenders concentrated on increasing the number of Native liaison officers in correctional institutions (Solicitor General Canada, 1993).

The policy guidelines of the Correctional Services of Canada state that instituting programs that specifically meet the needs of Native offenders is a primary focus of federal and provincial institutions. However, it appears that in practice, programming continues to be developed along traditional lines that focus on the

symptoms (e. g., substance abuse) rather than the underlying issues themselves (e. g. loss of cultural identity and self-worth). For instance, traditional programs continue to reflect a unidimensional view of social reality: that of dominant society. The cultural values, beliefs and holistic world view of Native offenders are not being addressed. As an oppressed group, their marginalization from the dominant society has not been acknowledged. Traditional programs also continue to utilize learning styles that are culturally inappropriate for Native offenders (More, 1987). For example, information is shared with the participants using a lecture style format. Little, if any, input from the participants themselves is actively encouraged. Thus, it is not surprising, that traditional programs have been largely ineffective in enabling Native offenders to reexamine their attitudes and behavior and begin the process of initiating change (McCaskill, 1985).

For instance, traditional programs fail to address concepts such as cooperation, obligation, sharing and reciprocity which are fundamental to the Aboriginal world view (Sampson, 1988). Although the traditional programs focus on helping participants to make the transition to the community easier, the concepts that form the basis of traditional programs are: competition, autonomy, and self-reliance. Reflecting the dominant segment of society, Heela and Lock (1981) suggest that these programs are based on enhancing self-contained individualism. Native offenders recognize that their opportunities for parole or early release increase if they attend institutional programming. In spite of this fact, the rate of participation of Native offenders in these traditional programs is low (Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General, 1988; Correctional Law Review, 1988).

However, at the same time, Native offenders have become increasingly involved and committed to Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood organizations. Unlike traditional programs, the Native Brotherhood and Sisterhoods are grounded in Native culture and tradition. These groups have evolved into extended support systems for

Native offenders and indirectly contribute to their sense of identity and self-worth. The Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood organizations reflect the holistic framework of the Aboriginal culture.

Culturally Sensitive Programs

In general, programming that is culturally sensitive recognizes that the different world views held by Natives and non-Natives need to be acknowledged and respected. Traditionally, Native people shared a special relationship with the Creator and sought to achieve balance and harmony throughout their life journey. In the Aboriginal world view, everything is interconnected. For instance, The Sacred Circle or Medicine Wheel, central to Native society, is an illustration of the way in which Native peoples conceive their world. For example, each of the four symbolic races, (black, white, red, brown) has a place in the four directions, (north, south, east, west) of the Medicine Wheel; as brothers and sisters of the human family. Each individual has four parts: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual which also have a place on the wheel and which must all be developed in order to achieve a sense of self-worth and identity. Disregarding the four dimensions of the self, the human family, and the cosmos would create imbalance and disharmony in the holistic Aboriginal world view.

Reclaiming Aboriginal tradition and culture is another component of culturally sensitive programs. At the individual level, cultural consciousness is an acknowledgment of the cultural dynamics that help shape identity and self-esteem. At a collective level, cultural consciousness exists when Natives interact meaningfully on the basis of common cultural traits that are the basis for achieving status and belonging.

Enabling Aboriginal people to understand the impact of colonialism on their contemporary situation as subordinate/oppressed peoples is necessary if programs are to be culturally sensitive. Consequently, Natives are able to view themselves apart from an individual "blame the victim" perspective.

Finally, culturally sensitive programming is designed to enable Aboriginal people to develop the knowledge and skills to empower themselves and their community. Practicing and sharing with others in a traditional talking circle is endemic to the process of increasing self awareness and self esteem.

Family Life Improvement Program (FLIP)

FLIP is an example of a culturally sensitive program currently being implemented at the Stan Daniels Center. FLIP is a life skills program based on Native tradition and spirituality that is designed to enhance Native identity and self-worth. The FLIP program is modeled on Native traditional doctrines that emphasize the inherent goodness of each individual. It also recognizes the ability of each individual to make changes to their lifestyle in a mutually sharing, caring and respectful environment.

The Family Life Improvement Program begins with a four-day fast supervised by the resident Elder, who is available throughout the program. Daily smudging[5] and weekly sweat lodge ceremonies give participants an opportunity to practice their Native traditional knowledge and skills.

The FLIP program enables the Native offenders to reconnect with their traditional ways. For some, the connections are simply dormant. For others, the links have never been forged. Not infrequently, the participants have little knowledge or understanding of their Native heritage. One of the underlying assumptions of the FLIP program is that reconnecting to Native culture and spirituality will provide the participants with a foundation which they can use to function effectively following their release into the community.

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[5] Smudging is the practice of burning sweetgrass, cedar, or sage as a means of connecting to *Manitowa (h)*. The smudge is ignited and passed clockwise around the circle. Each person inhales the smoke and passes it over their head, eyes, mouth, heart and body. In my experience, the Great Spirit is asked for guidance so that we may hear, see, speak, connect and act in a respectful, honest way towards ourselves and others.

The traditional healing circle provides an opportunity for Native offenders to examine some of their self-defeating behaviors within a trusting, mutually supportive atmosphere. FLIP helps participants to develop knowledge and skills that enable them to identify and communicate feelings and behaviors that may be causing conflict. The sacred or traditional healing circle is a Native traditional way of equalizing power and promoting respect and harmony within the group.

A greater understanding of one's own identity and self-esteem is derived from exploring the relationship among feelings, behavior and action. While acknowledging their past, the participants are encouraged to develop their sense of self-esteem by integrating the positive aspects of their Native identity. Self-esteem is addressed from a holistic perspective. The physical, spiritual, mental and emotional dimensions of the Medicine Wheel are the focus of the seven-week program.

The FLIP program is a relatively new program based on the concept that if Native offenders are able to reexamine their past history, cultural connections and Native identity and self-defeating behavior and attitudes in a safe, respectful environment, they will be able to initiate changes in themselves and their world view. The FLIP program enabled Native offenders to begin or renew the process of integrating Native spirituality and tradition into their life journey. Acknowledging past mistakes and developing a renewed sense of empowerment is expected to increase the likelihood of a successful personal readjustment to the community.

In summary, the FLIP program provided Native offenders with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. Through the use of traditional healing circles and ceremonies, Native offenders were able to begin the process of healing and gain a new perspective on their Native identity and self-worth. However, the success of the FLIP program participants has not been documented. The nature of their experiences and journeys of self-awareness in the FLIP program have not as yet been explored.

Chapter Three

THE METHODOLOGY OF THE JOURNEY

The purpose of the research study was to explore the nature of the experiences of male Native offenders participating in a Family Life Improvement Program (FLIP) that enables them to make the transition from the correctional institution to the community. The review of the literature in the previous chapter clearly indicated that although concern has been expressed about the overwhelming proportion of Native offenders in the criminal justice system, little systematic research has investigated neither the perceptions nor the experiences of male Native offenders. Government sponsored and/or funded research has been primarily concerned with gathering statistical data supplemented by anecdotal evidence (Nielsen, 1992). Therefore, the body of knowledge that seeks to understand the journey from correctional institutions to the community, and to explain the rising rates of incarceration and recidivism among members of the Native community lacks the necessary perspective of the lived experience of male Native offenders. Included in this chapter is a brief discussion of qualitative methods, the rationale for the selection of an ethnographic approach, a description of the collaboration process, the methods of data collection and analysis, and how the issues of rigor and ethical decisions were handled. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the interconnections between collaboration and data analysis.

This research study pioneered a unique approach in attempting to understand the cultural environment of the male Native offender. After participating in the Family Life Improvement Program at the Stan Daniels Correctional Center, the residents were asked to share the nature of their experiences in the program. Their reflections were shared with the researcher who had been one of the Native participants of the seven week FLIP program. Thus, the relationship between the researcher and participants had a

shared history of mutual trust and respect. Bonds of trust and confidentiality that developed during the FLIP program brought a different dimension of "shared meaning" to the interactive interviews. In essence, a collaborative dialogue developed in which the respondents reflected upon their background and experiences of everyday life and the FLIP program. To explore the lived experience of the respondents[6], a qualitative research paradigm was chosen as this framework helped to reflect an intimate but respectful view of the participating Native community members.

The Qualitative Paradigm

The qualitative paradigm provides a most appropriate framework for an in depth study of the nature of the experiences of Native offenders. The holistic all-encompassing world view of Aboriginals fits the open ended design of qualitative research (Couture, 1985; Morrisette, Mackenzie & Morrisette, 1993; Morse & Lock, 1988). Rather than using structured questionnaires that may interrupt the narrative flow, an open ended dialogue that encouraged the collaborators to choose the nature of the experiences they shared, was used. The research design sought to explore meaningful experiences as defined by the collaborators themselves. For instance, using a qualitative approach, Native offenders are viewed as a group with specific needs, shaped by their knowledge and experience about their own social reality. Qualitative research most closely captured the vision of the Native perspective of the collaborators in the FLIP program in a respectful manner. Also, qualitative inquiry recognizes that despite the degree of shared meaning between the collaborators, the principal researcher has also been shaped by her/his own knowledge and experience which may not necessarily be shared by the other collaborators.

As an example of qualitative research design in practice, the roles of the respondents, the principal researcher, the facilitators, the Elder and the administrators,

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[6] The participants in the FLIP program will be referred to as either respondents or collaborators throughout the research study.

became blurred and frequently overlapped. As a result of the ongoing dynamics created by the participants, facilitators and the nature of their experiences, both inside and outside the program, each Family Life Improvement Program evolves somewhat differently from previous FLIP programs. Consequently, the issues that are of primary concern to the participants receive the greatest amount of time allocated to them. For instance, in the FLIP group that was interviewed, a significant period of time was devoted to the concept of the "inner child" as it was identified by the respondents as more important to them than other concerns. Therefore, the personal perspectives and experiences of all the collaborators in the research study; the participants, facilitators, Elders and principal researcher were viewed as important sources of data. Moreover, each individual perspective was seen as unique, but also shared commonalities with the other respondents and those closely connected to the program.

The qualitative paradigm is characterized by an interpretive focus that was realized by using a number of alternate methods. Some of the data gathering methods for exploring the lived experience of the collaborators included: : participant observation, interactive individual and group interviews, storytelling, and reflecting through journaling and memoing. In this research study, these multiple methods helped to create a rich detailed description of an oppressed group, male Native offenders, that are seldom studied in their naturalistic everyday setting.

The ongoing process of change during FLIP, the social context of the setting that is created in the program and its meaning to the collaborators were fundamental links explored in qualitative inquiry. The unique journeys of each individual respondent throughout the seven weeks of the Family Life Improvement Program were authenticated and analyzed using the qualitative framework. Qualitative design encourages creativity and flexibility in molding the method to fit the cultural context. Thus, the stories of the collaborators were not only related from the head but shared from the heart.

The qualitative paradigm includes a number of approaches, such as grounded theory, phenomenology and ethnography. Each of these three frameworks attempts to understand the human experience from an emic or participant-centered point of view. Grounded theory relies on creating a theoretical framework after using a structured approach to analyze the qualitative data. Phenomenology focuses on an unstructured approach that seeks to find the essence of an everyday experience. A basic question ethnography asks is, how do members of cultural groups construct and perceive their social world? What gives their everyday world meaning (Patton, 1990)? Given that the research focused on gaining an understanding of the nature of the experiences of male Native offenders from a specific cultural context, ethnography was a most suitable choice.

Ethnography

In the qualitative paradigm, ethnography attempts to not only describe, but also to understand culture. Van Manen claims that "ethnography studies the culturally shared, common sense perceptions of every day experiences" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 177). To accurately portray another culture, ethnographers must understand "whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members and to do it in any role that they accept for any one of themselves" (Goodenough, 1966, p. 36). In this research study, the everyday culture being described was the Family Life Improvement Program at the Stan Daniels Correctional Center.

An ethnographic methodology was used to describe and understand the nature of the experiences of male Native offenders in the FLIP program from the wider cultural context of the Stan Daniels Correctional Center. Ethnography seeks to "grasp the Native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world" (Malinowski, 1922a, p. 25). Inductive reasoning in ethnography incorporates intuitive knowledge gained *from* the participants, not only *about* them. Exploring the "emic"

perspective of the culture is fundamental to gaining an understanding of the richness and complexity of interactions described by an ethnographic study. In this instance, the "emic" perspective is that of the male Aboriginal offenders who are involved in the FLIP program. Consequently, in order to understand and interpret the meaning of the cultural setting to others, an ethnographic researcher must also be aware of her/his own cultural beliefs, assumptions and values.

Meo Matsuin Reflections

The qualitative ethnographic research study to be described was first conceptualized following an evaluation of the Stan Daniels Center in which I was a member of the evaluation team. The staff, residents and ex-residents of SDC answered a lengthy questionnaire on their perceptions of the Stan Daniels Correctional Center (Davis-Patsula & Mogey, 1993). The experiences they shared about the Stan Daniels Center helped me to reconnect to the spiritual aspect of my culture and resulted in the reframing of my life's journey. My experiences at the Stan Daniels Center, whose philosophy is grounded in Native culture, tradition and healing, gave direction to the present research study. After much personal reflection and dialogue with other members of the Native community, both inside and outside the Stan Daniels Center, I decided to focus my thesis research on the Family Life Improvement Program that operates within the Stan Daniels Correctional Center. Gaining an insight into my own spirituality and tradition encouraged me to share how meaningful and empowering the process of participating in the FLIP program was. The research study was my attempt to do so. It was my way of sharing with both the Native and the academic community, the fruits of my experience.

I came to the Stan Daniels Center after returning to Canada four (*newo*) years earlier. My children and I left a mining town in Arnhemland Aboriginal Reserve, Northern Territory, Australia to return to school and university in Canada. My interconnections to the Maori of New Zealand and the Bukmuk Aboriginal people of

Arnhemland, Australia began the reformulation of my Native identity that had remained dormant for many years.

Throughout my upbringing, the Native heritage of my family was denied and discounted. Around the age of 8, I began questioning my heritage but was met with silence and a reminder that I was what my father was: Euro-Canadian. Again, as an adolescent, I asked questions but was denied answers.

Following a brief period at university, I worked as a correctional officer in a provincial women's jail and at a mixed institutional setting for Native youth. Travelling and living for an extended period in New Zealand and Australia enabled my curiosity about my heritage to resurface. As a community worker in Aboriginal reserve communities, I related my limited Native connections to those of the New Zealand Maoris and Australian Aboriginals. These everyday experiences enabled me to reflect on and anticipate the return to my own Native community. My academic experience has enabled me to develop skills as well as an understanding of the ways in which I can make a contribution to my community. The time was right for my experiences at the Stan Daniels Center. The present research study is truly a weaving together of my lived experience thus far along my life journey.

Cultural Reconnection: SDC and FLIP

As a summer student, researcher-evaluator, I participated in the Family Life Improvement Program during May-June, 1993. It was the first time that I had participated in a Native talking and healing circle. I am proud of my Native heritage, and committed to the holistic healing of my community. However, like many others who have been marginalized or dispossessed as a result of their Aboriginal ancestry, I had little opportunity to reconnect with my culture and tradition. As a participant in FLIP, I was able to reflect on my past while being grounded in a cultural safety net of Native tradition and spirituality. The experience of sharing and communicating within

the circle with other Natives who shared the experience of marginalization and a similar background helped to clarify my Native spiritual journey.

The summer months as an in house evaluator at the Stan Daniels Correctional Center helped me to become more familiar with the setting, residents, ex-residents and staff. As part of an evaluation team, I interviewed those directly involved with the Stan Daniels Center including other institutions, residents, ex-residents and staff. I also helped to compile a final report. These months also provided an opportunity to reflect on my experiences in the FLIP program. I maintained ongoing contact with the other participants, facilitators and the Elder of the Family Life Improvement Program. The genesis of the idea to further explore the experiences of the stakeholders in the FLIP program gradually emerged throughout the summer. During informal conversations with residents, ex-residents, Elders, and other community members, I asked others about their perceptions of respectful, suitable and appropriate ways and means of further exploring the experiences of participants in the FLIP program as my thesis project gradually evolved.

Throughout the winter term, as I was developing my proposal, I continued to maintain contact at the Stan Daniels Correctional Center and informally collaborated with other Native community members. As a graduate practicum student, with the support of the program administrators, I explored the program materials used in the Family Life Improvement Program. To gain further insight into the integration of methods and materials in FLIP, I attended as a participant from September to early December, 1993. While further adapting and revising my thesis proposal, I regularly attended two consecutive FLIP programs from January to April, 1994. The process of collaboration was ready to begin.

The Emic Approach

In an ethnographic approach, it is the responsibility of the researcher to develop an awareness of both the insiders' or "emic" perspective of reality as well as the outsiders' or "etic" view of reality. The focus of this research study was the "emic"

perspective. However, although the collaborators have shared the same set of experiences, their perception of these experiences differs. For instance, residents, and those closely involved with the FLIP program, including the principal researcher, might all consider themselves as representatives of the "emic" perspective. However, the residents may not necessarily agree that those closely involved with the program, for example, the administrators, or those who participate in FLIP but do not reside at SDC, share an "insider" view. From their vantage point, they may perceive the administrators, or the principal researcher as "outsiders". In essence, it depends on the relative position of your perspective. Therefore, considering these separate layers of reality throughout the process of data collection and analysis enhanced the development of an emerging picture of FLIP.

During the research study, I have continued to consult with Native collaborators, Elders and other community members. Journaling throughout the process of the FLIP program and the research itself has added another dimension and source of knowledge to the data collection and analysis. The structure and conceptual framework of the ethnographic method has provided a flexible and meaningful way of gathering, interpreting and understanding the data shared from the collaborators of the cultural environment of FLIP and the Stan Daniels Correctional Center.

The Collaboration Process

Profile of the Collaborators

The respondents who shared their experiences of FLIP for the research study consisted of male Native offenders, the Elder, Native program facilitators, and Native and non-Native administrators of the FLIP program. Therefore, a number of collaborators who played different roles in relation to the FLIP program were asked to share their experiences. The numbers of residents of the Stan Daniels Correctional Center who participate in FLIP varied from one program to the next. Therefore, it was

difficult to predict the exact number of residents who would participate in the research study.

The FLIP collaborators ranged in age from 20 to 50 years of age. The average age of the respondents was approximately 30 years old. Their sentence length at SDC varied from 2 months to 2 years. Some of the collaborators were doing time for violent offences, while others were doing time for traffic offences. Often, their offences were committed while under the influence of alcohol. Most of the respondents were married or involved in significant relationships. None of the collaborators were first time offenders.

The collaborators closely connected to the FLIP ranged in age from 30 to 70 years of age. Their number of years of experience in the criminal justice system ranged from 5 to 15 years of experience. Most of these respondents had experiences in more than one institutional setting. These collaborators were committed to the underlying philosophy of the Stan Daniels Center and the FLIP program.

The participants of the FLIP program and those closely connected to it were asked to share their experiences in the FLIP program. A total of 9 collaborators who participated in the FLIP program in the last 3 to 12 months, two administrators and the Elder were individually interviewed. In addition, a focus group interview of 8 additional respondents were audio taped during the concluding week of FLIP.

In the qualitative paradigm, the adequacy and appropriateness of the data gathered from the interviewing process is more important than the actual number of collaborators who share their stories. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure that the research study explored the in depth experiences of the collaborators who shared the culture of the FLIP program. From the perspectives of the respondents, including those both directly and indirectly connected to the FLIP program, a holisitic picture of the FLIP program emerged.

Culture of the Collaborators: FLIP

One of the strengths of qualitative research is the recognition that reality is socially constructed and is constantly changing (Patton, 1990). Thus, the organization of the FLIP program is an excellent example of how social reality is constructed. For the most part, inmates who transfer to the Stan Daniels Center have already served most of their sentence. Their residence at SDC varies directly in relation to their sentence length and parole eligibility. Thus, admitting participants into the FLIP program was flexible and dependent on the sentence length, other program commitments, as well as the needs of the residents.

The Family Life Improvement Program dates are arranged in advance by the facilitators of the program. The FLIP program is structured around the traditional ways of the Native community. In traditional times, work was scheduled around the cooler months, fall, winter and spring, as is the FLIP program. The FLIP program utilizes the summer to reconnect with Native culture through Mother Earth. In summer, Native residents alongside other Natives set aside time to reconnect with the community and actively participate in activities such as building a new sweat lodge, sweet grass picking, berry picking and attending ceremonies such as Sun Dances, powwows and the pilgrimage at Lac Ste. Anne.

The Native facilitators are advised, usually by caseworkers, prior to the beginning of the program, who will be attending FLIP. In the majority of cases, attending the FLIP program has been discussed as part of the case management plan of the resident. Participation in FLIP is voluntary, although the unwritten rule that the parole board looks favorably on attending programs cannot be completely discounted. Sometimes, mutual consensus was reached between caseworker and resident about attending FLIP. Sometimes, the resident has made his own personal commitment to

attend FLIP and "work on himself"[7]. Sometimes, the resident is unenthusiastic about attending, as he considers himself "all programmed out"[8]. Sometimes, the resident is ambivalent before the FLIP program begins, having heard conflicting underground reports from the guys[9], he has decided to make up his own mind. Sometimes, the resident is anxious for a break from institutional life and is focused on getting a job. Sometimes, the resident just wants to "do his own time"[10].

Facilitators of the FLIP program regularly encourage Native community members outside the institution to attend. Some of the participants are referred from the Family Life Improvement Program held at the downtown offices of Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA). The "moccasin telegraph" or word of mouth is a very effective tool in finding participants interested in being involved in the FLIP program at SDC. For the most part, the majority of the participants don't know each other before they begin the FLIP program. The atmosphere at the beginning of the program is somewhat reserved, but in my experience, as the group becomes more familiar with the traditional circle and one another, the atmosphere becomes more relaxed. The setting of

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7 The term, "work on himself" is frequently used at SDC. It implies that the individual wishes to become more self-aware, work through his issues, and/or make some changes in his way of behaving and/or perceiving the world.

8 The term, "all programmed out" is frequently used at SDC by a resident to indicate to others that he is fed up with taking programs. Sometimes, this implies that programs don't make a difference, or that he is working on himself anyway and doesn't need them. Even though residents may be " all programmed out", they do participate in programs as it may improve their chances for a favourable parole board hearing if they have voluntarily attended programs.

9 The term, "guys" or "boys", not "men" is used by the residents themselves, and others such as the Elder and administrators at SDC to refer to the residents or inmates who are incarcerated. I think the distinction is an important one. It reflects the fact that they do not yet see themselves as "men"; they see themselves in the process of becoming "men". . .but not yet. Further research is needed to explore and clarify this issue.

10 Another phrase frequently used at SDC is "do your own time". "Doing your own time" means minding your own business, keeping to yourself, and not getting involved with either persons or programs, if it can be avoided. "Doing your own time" is considered to be one way to make your sentence pass quicker.

the FLIP program is also created by the Elders, facilitators, and administrators involved as well as the program materials used in FLIP and the concerns of the participants.

Collaborating: The Program Materials and FLIP

The materials in the FLIP program are designed to be used simply as a stepping stone for encouraging the participants to discuss their perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. To establish the groundwork, the program begins with a week long discussion on Native culture that involves a number of different Elders. Native tradition and spirituality are the fundamental concepts that interrelate the specific topic areas (see Appendix C) and give them meaning in a Native cultural context. Throughout the seven weeks of the FLIP program, some of the topics discussed are: jealousy, feelings and communication, violence, abuse, sexuality, grief and loss, anger, substance abuse and relationships.

The Family Life Improvement Program materials incorporates both Native learning styles as well as the Native cultural belief and value system, "Watch-Then-Do" (e. g. , preparing for the sweat lodge) and "Listen-Then-Do" (e. g. , learning values through stories shared by the Elder) and "Think-Then-Do" (e. g. , thinking through a response carefully and thoroughly before speaking) (More, 1987). In FLIP, respecting the silence of others, and sharing when you are comfortable is one of the ground rules of the program. Aboriginal cultural values and beliefs such as: mutual respect; spiritual, emotional, physical and mental harmony and balance; generosity, sharing, reciprocity, and cooperation; present-oriented time frame; holistic world view; respect for age; and traditional knowledge and teachings of Native peoples are practiced in the FLIP program.

Traditional Cultural Collaboration and FLIP

Fasting

Whenever possible, the ground rules of the FLIP program are based on Native traditional ways. For instance, The FLIP program begins with a fast, when it is at all feasible. A fast may be described as a period of time during which connection through prayer to the Creator or *Manitowa(h)* is sought. A fast is a time of self reflection or meditation during which the body is deprived of liquid and solid refreshments. Often the fast is done for a purpose, such as a vision quest. The person who is fasting may be asking the Creator for spiritual guidance or help with something specific. Those committed to fasting are supervised and monitored by the Elder. The fasts at SDC may vary from 48 to 96 hours depending on the situation and the decision of the Elder. A ceremonial feast is held prior to and following the fast. However, not all participants choose to take part in the fast. The "time may not be right" for them.

Collaboration and Native Cultural Values

Many things in Native culture depend on the season, and the right "time" for events to occur. For example, the respondents spoke of the "time being right" to make changes in their lives. Given the opportunity to attend the FLIP program which explored feelings and communications, some of the collaborators said they felt ready to commit themselves to begin to heal and follow a spiritual path. Allowing yourself time to "achieve balance or develop the tools"[11] is part of the Native way. The Creator understands that we make mistakes and knows that we may fall occasionally along our spiritual journey. He gives us an opportunity to pick ourselves up and try again. Developing strategies by using "time" and "tools" is a way of reflecting on and forgiving yourself for past mistakes as well as dealing with issues as they emerge "one

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[11] The expression "achieving balance" or "developing tools" refers to the process of internalizing Native spirituality and tradition so that it may be used as a means of integrating Native values and beliefs into one's life that in turn may be used in making a successful transition to the community.

day at a time". Another traditional way of "achieving balance" or "problem solving" is the traditional talking or healing circle.

The Traditional Circle

The ground rules of FLIP and the healing and talking circle enhance the development of relationships among the participants based on mutual trust and respect. Sharing, and caring in a honest way characterizes the circle. For instance, speakers are not to be interrupted in the process of sharing, everyone waits for their turn to speak, and no one leaves the circle until every member of the circle has had an opportunity to speak. The traditional circle is facilitated by the leader, who initially begins the ceremony by sharing first. While talking, she/he simultaneously holds either an eagle feather, a talking stick and/or a sacred stone. These symbols represent a reminder to those people sitting in the circle to speak in a truthful and caring way, and to be respectful of others when it is their turn to speak. Furthermore, when an individual is holding one of these symbols, it is an indication they are not to be interrupted.

The traditional circle provides a format for FLIP that is part of the culture heritage of Native people. Essentially, it is a non-threatening form of sharing based on traditional storytelling. The contribution of each person in the circle is respected and acknowledged. Often, stories shared in the circle remind others of their own lived experiences. Participants are encouraged to share their own experiences in FLIP with others outside the program if they wish, but are discouraged from sharing confidences about other participants in the program. Reconnecting with the *same* participants throughout the seven weeks helps to develop close knit relationships between the group members that mutually enhances the healing and growing process.

The Sweat Lodge

One of the sacred ceremonies of Native tribal peoples (Cree, Sioux) involves participating in sweat lodges. The sweat lodge ceremony may be focused on either healing, and/or praying to the Creator. During the seven weeks of the FLIP program,

the participants have the opportunity to attend the sweat lodge each week. The SDC sweat lodge area is situated outside the city limits. Choosing to participate in a sweat lodge ceremony is a personal decision. Usually, the decision to participate is based on whether or not the individual feels that the "time is right". The sweat lodge provides another opportunity for the participants to heal their wounds that may have surfaced in the traditional circle. If they do not choose to enter the sweat lodge, they may still visit the sweat lodge grounds and share in the feast following the ceremony. Not only is it an opportunity to connect with the Creator but also offers an unstructured relaxed atmosphere in which to connect with others. Furthermore, it provides another traditional way of healing and growing that is used in the FLIP program.

Collaborating in The Cultural Environment: The Stan Daniels Center

The philosophy of the Stan Daniels Center is grounded in the belief that, in order to facilitate change, consideration must be given to all facets of an individual, including their physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs. Central to this philosophy is the assumption that the individual must play an active role in his treatment. Therefore, by involving offenders in the treatment process, they derive a sense of ownership of their treatment plans and therefore, are more motivated and committed to making a successful re-entry into the community. Underlying this philosophy is Native spirituality and tradition. The Stan Daniels Center, in general, and the Family Life Improvement Program, in particular, gives residents the opportunity to begin the process of change.

A rich, detailed description of the physical setting of the FLIP program and cultural context of the Stan Daniels Center provides the background setting of the research study. The Stan Daniels Correctional Center operates out of one of a set of buildings located adjacent to the "drag"[12] area of Edmonton. Previously, these were

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12 The "drag" or the "street" is the inner city area where drugs and drug deals, prostitution, stolen goods and contracts are negotiated and carried out. It is often the habitat of the criminal element.

the training barracks for the RCMP and rumors abound that in an earlier period, these buildings were also holding facilities for death row prisoners. Stories also circulate that hangings have taken place in this quadrangle and that a resident "wandering spirit" takes care of the premises. In fact, viewed from a distance, they rather resemble an old fashioned stockade. As you begin to climb the stairs through the open door, (except after 12 p.m.) the eye is magnetized by a Native painting above and recessed back from the entrance. The public area of the Stan Daniels Correctional Center is alive with artifacts and paintings that express the cultural commitment to the Aboriginal world view of both residents and staff.

Despite budgetary and staff constraints, opportunities are provided for residents to become involved in cultural activities as much as possible. A ceremonial room has been set aside and a resident Elder is available on a part time basis. The residents at SDC are encouraged to develop and maintain strong ties to the Aboriginal community. For instance, during the week, a Native healing circle and a Native ACOA group (adult children of alcoholics) is held at SDC. Residents are able to attend Poundmakers (a Native alcohol and drug treatment facility) one night a week. Often on the weekends, if staff is available, supervised groups attend round dances or powwows or other ceremonies such as Sun Dances, and the pilgrimage at Lac Ste. Anne, that are within a reasonable distance of SDC.

The Stan Daniels Correctional facility is designated a minimum security facility. SDC accommodates a maximum of 60 residents. Both federal and provincial inmates reside at SDC. The residents at Stan Daniels Correctional Center have been transferred from other provincial or federal institutions. Residents may be on inmate status, or close to their eligibility for parole. The sentence length of each of the residents' varies. Evening and weekend passes are earned responsibilities. Residents may have visitors after 5 p.m. each evening.

Establishing and maintaining regular contact with family and friends outside the institution is encouraged. This description of the Stan Daniel Correctional Center provides another source of data that enriches our understanding of the environment in which the resident lives on a day to day basis, participates in the FLIP program and reflects on his return to the community.

Methods

Qualitative research methods acknowledge that the principle researcher and/or collaborator brings her/his own lived experience to the research undertaking. As a Native collaborator in FLIP, I share similar understandings of Native spirituality and tradition, and some common similar lived experiences of family fragmentation and alienation as a child, youth and adult. However, I have not shared the experience of incarceration. Nevertheless, the gradual development of mutual trust, respect and understanding through shared experiences in the FLIP program enabled the FLIP respondents to feel comfortable to share their stories during the collaboration process of the research.

The primary methods of data collection utilized in the study for exploring the lived experience of the collaborators were : participant observation, interactive individual and group interviews, storytelling, and reflecting through journaling and memoing. Journaling was used to reflect on my experiences as both participant observer and principal researcher in the FLIP program and to analyze the stories of the collaborators. Consequently, my journal doubled as a tool of reflection and also as a tool of analysis.

Participant Observation

As mentioned earlier, the preparation for the research study of the FLIP program began approximately nine months before the actual process of interviewing began. Before interviewing, I had participated in four different FLIP programs. As a practicum student, I had also reviewed the program materials used in the FLIP program

during the fall term of 1993. Throughout this period, I continued to maintain relationships with FLIP graduates, facilitators, as well as other residents and staff members. On a regular basis, I was in contact with the Elder and continued to attend sweat lodge ceremonies. By the time I was ready to begin the interviewing process, I was established as an accepted, familiar, non-threatening presence at the Stan Daniels Correctional Center. Consequently, I gained familiarity with the FLIP program, its program materials, its facilitators, administrators, and the Elder associated with the program over an extended period of time. My credibility at SDC was based on my personal commitment to a spiritual path, my directness and honesty and my interactions with others. My role as a student from the university was secondary. In fact, my role as a female, was probably more significant to the other collaborators than was my role as a university student. The underlying emphasis in the FLIP program is sharing who you are, not what you do.

Interviewing

The stories of the Native collaborators were shared during interactive individual and group interviews. In some situations, audio and video recording has not been considered culturally appropriate. Although there was some hesitancy on the part of a few of the respondents, they agreed to the interviews being recorded on audio-cassette. Otherwise, the dialogue would have been hand recorded during the interviews. Following the interview session, journal writing enabled the researcher to reflect and share both the content and process of the interview.

The interviewing process was interactive and open-ended. It consisted of a focused group interview during the last week of the FLIP program and individual unstructured interviews with the other respondents, administrators and the Elder. The focused group interview enabled the group members to share their reflections on the FLIP program in the familiar atmosphere of the traditional circle. The one-to-one interview process enabled the collaborators to describe, *in their own words*, the nature

of their experiences in a way that was personally meaningful for them in a safe, respectful, confidential environment.

Arranging the interviews required a great deal of flexibility and adaptability in working around the other commitments of the collaborators. Although the interviews were arranged in advance, often the collaborators made other commitments in between and were unavailable for the time they initially agreed to.

For example, in one case, I arranged on the previous Friday, to talk to one of the collaborators on the following Tuesday afternoon at 1 o'clock. I even phoned SDC on Tuesday morning to ask one of the staff to remind him of the appointment. I arrived at 1 o'clock to find he had signed out. When I inquired further, I found out that the staff member had forgotten to remind him of the appointment. In addition, the resident had gone with the Elder to the sweat lodge grounds. In the Native way, if the Elder asks for your assistance, that comes before all other considerations. So I understood why the commitment to the Elder took precedence. In this particular case, we arranged to meet at least 5 or 6 times before the interview took place. Although one reason for his delays may have been his wariness of taping our exchange, the primary reason was that he acted as the "wa-scapios"[13] and was very committed to helping the Elder.

On another occasion, I agreed to meet one of the collaborators on a Friday afternoon at 4 o' clock. The collaborator was at the sweat lodge ceremony. Sometimes, the sweat lodge ceremony ends earlier, so I decided to arrive at 1 o'clock just in case. At 2:30 p.m., I found out that the sweat lodge ceremony began late, and they weren't expected to return till 3:30 p.m. At 3:30 p.m., the collaborator arrived and was too exhausted from the sweat lodge ceremony to be able to fully contribute to an in depth interview. The research study helped me to develop a greater degree of patience,

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[13] "Wa-scapios" is the Cree word for the person who helps the Elder during the sweat lodge ceremony. His duties include building the fire to heat the rocks, taking care of the pipe for the Elder, and smudging the sweat lodge before the ceremony. In general, he/she helps the Elder before, during and after the sweat lodge ceremony.

tolerance, understanding and reverence for the "right time" which are, after all, values that are widely respected in Native culture.

Storytelling

Before posing the research question to the collaborators, I briefly reviewed some of the reasons I chose to engage in this research study. I began by telling other collaborators that over the last three decades, twenty five major reports had been compiled on Natives in the criminal justice system. However, only a few reports (Davis-Patsula & Mogey, 1993; Morse & Lock, 1988; Waldram, 1992) *asked* the *Native* residents *themselves* their *experiences* or their *perceptions* about the transition from the institution to the community. I asked them the rhetorical question: "Who knows better than those who have been in the system?" Following this preamble, I asked them the primary research question, "What is the nature of your experiences in the FLIP program?" Often they responded by saying, "Well, what do you want me to talk about?" I then stated that I wanted them to talk about the experiences that they felt comfortable sharing. Often, they said, "Do you mean the FLIP program? I replied, "Yes, and any other experiences that led up to the FLIP program that you would like to share. The primary question elicited a spontaneous response. The collaborative dialogue can be described as an intimate, respectful sharing of lived experience.

Transcribing the interviews was done professionally as a means of more efficiently using time. The principal investigator felt that as time was limited, reflecting on the interviews was more important rather than personally transcribing them. Due to the sensitive nature of the dialogue on the transcripts, the confidentiality, and anonymity of the collaborators was stressed. The anonymity of the respondents was protected by the use of code names known only to the principal researcher.

Reflecting Through Journaling and Memoing

In the qualitative paradigm, intuitive understanding is an acceptable source of knowledge. In planning, implementing and analyzing the research study, two different

but complementary techniques were simultaneously employed: journaling and memoing Together, they enabled me to link the different stages of the research process together.

Journaling has helped me to maintain an ongoing sense of intimacy and detachment throughout the process of the research study by providing a safe space for sharing my thoughts and reactions. The technique of memoing has enabled me to capture the evolving pattern of the process of collaboration. Each style has added a different dimension to the research journey. The two different styles of reflecting have provided a more holistic way of perceiving the process of collaboration and analysis.

Journaling and memoing have been tools of reflection and analysis that enabled the focus of the research dialogue to shift back and forth from the cognitive domain to the interpersonal/interactive domain. Journaling has been used as a tool to personally reflect on the process of: participating in the FLIP program and collaborating during the interviewing process. Memoing had a more analytical focus and including reflecting on the process of developing the significant themes for data collection and validating the analysis of the data. Most importantly, journaling and memoing has enabled me to maintain a holistic focus that is another means of being respectful of Native culture and tradition.

Collaboration and Data Collection

The process of interviewing collaborators, reflecting on the research, transcribing the interviews, reflecting on and beginning the data analysis occurred simultaneously. For instance, the majority of the collaborators were interviewed in the two to three weeks following the windup of the FLIP program. The focus group interview was completed in the last week of the FLIP program to enable one of the respondents to share in the circle before he left SDC the following morning. The program administrators were interviewed in the middle stages of the research process. The Elder was interviewed near the final stages of the interviewing process.

Throughout the entire interviewing process, I continued an ongoing dialogue

with the other respondents. For instance, one of the participants who declined to be interviewed maintained an active interest in the research. He always asked how the research and writing was going and if I would be taking FLIP again. Other collaborators were anxious to have the tapes transcribed as they wanted to share their dialogue and experiences with other Natives. Insights, and frustrations were shared with the other collaborators when appointments continually needed to be re-scheduled.

Native Community Collaboration

Throughout the process of writing the proposal, participating in the FLIP program and gathering and analyzing data, an ongoing dialogue was maintained with Elders, residents, staff, and other Native community members. Consequently, the entire research process was characterized by an emphasis on cooperation and collaboration. Often in the past, research on Native issues has been done "to" rather than "with" the Native community (Couture, 1985; Dyck, 1990; Minore, 1992). In these studies, neither the permission nor the input of Aboriginal individuals and/or communities have been sought. In fact, the results of the research have not been readily available nor necessarily pertinent to the needs of the community.

This research study pioneered a unique approach. It was based on the premise that Aboriginal people are "experts" about their own lives. When and if consulted, they are able and willing to document and share their intuitive understanding of their lived experience to benefit themselves and their community. Researching and sharing stories describing the nature of their experiences in the FLIP program is a small attempt to begin to recognize the inherent wisdom of Native peoples about their own life journey.

Collaborating=Capturing Rigor

Rigor is substantiated in the qualitative paradigm by using a number of different methods that check to see if the stories of the collaborators share common threads and support one another. The rigor of the research study was enriched by the number of methods employed. For instance, participant observation, interactive group and

individual interviews, storytelling, and reflecting through journaling and memoing were used.

The focus group was the first data collection activity completed, then the respondents collaborated in an interactive face to face interview with the principal researcher. Therefore, from the beginning of the data collection process, I had an intuitive sense of what I might expect from the respondents in the research study.

During the focus group interview as each person in the circle spoke in turn, the number of common threads in the dialogue began to create an interwoven pattern of responses. In addition, the experiences described by the different collaborators further elaborated a similar interwoven design. Following the conclusion of the focus group interview, as well as each individual interview, a journal entry was made. The reflections in the journal and the documentation in the memos clarified when the data collected was adequate and appropriate for the purposes of the research study.

However, as a further check on rigor, a resident was interviewed who had participated in FLIP but not in the same FLIP program as the other collaborators. Again, his experiences reflected those of the other collaborators. Therefore, the adequacy and appropriateness of the empirical materials collected from the interviews was confirmed not only by the written dialogue of the principle researcher but also an an emergent pattern of similar stories from the other collaborators.

Specifically documenting the research process on an ongoing basis is another means of ensuring rigor in a qualitative study. Engaging in the combined processes of journaling and memoing after a period of time elapsed revealed another perspective on the research. This source of data explored both the perspective of the principle investigator/ collaborator and the process of sharing the collaborators stories before the raw data was reviewed and analyzed. This was the initial step in constructing the journey of the collaborators.

Providing a rich description of the process of collaborating, and collecting and analyzing data ensures that reconstructing the research study by other investigators, given the same commitment as the principal researcher, is achievable. By reconstructing the research journey, the "fit" of the research can be easily verified.

In this research study, the primary means to ensure rigor was the ongoing verification throughout the research with secondary informants or collaborators. This verification was accomplished in a number of ways. Collaboration with Elders and other Native community members occurred on a regular basis. Throughout the entire process of the research, I also shared a collaborative dialogue with a Native ceremonial leader and psychologist whose comments also reflected a similar view of the research collaboration (Couture, 1994).

During the collaboration process, questions that arose about the data were sometimes confirmed by the respondent himself, sometimes by the other respondents and other times verified by two or more collaborators. Unique to this research collaboration, the majority of the respondents whether participants or those closely connected to the FLIP program, shared similar views about their experiences in the program. Thus, the collaborators including Elders, program facilitators, administrators and residents are all potential secondary sources of cross verification.

Ethical Dilemmas: Rights of the Collaborators

The male Native offenders that collaborated on the research were incarcerated. Therefore, it was necessary to obtain not only the informed consent of the individual Native offenders but also the permission of Stan Daniels Correctional Center and Native Counselling Services of Alberta. Prior to the formalization of the research proposal, the project was discussed with the Deputy Director of Programs, the Director of the Stan Daniels Correctional Center, and the Director of Native Counselling Services of Alberta. The feasibility of the research proposal was also discussed with

Native offenders, program facilitators, other administrators, Elders and members of the Native community over the last year.

The participants were asked to voluntarily agree to participate in the research with the understanding that they may choose to withdraw from the research at any time. The consent form ensured that the rights of the participants to privacy and anonymity were respected in the research. The information sheet provided the respondents with a basic understanding of the intent of the research. All reasonable precautions were taken to protect the identity of the participants. Each collaborator was given a code name so that the transcripts may only be identified by the researcher. These code names were used throughout the research study to safeguard the identity of the respondents. Participants were reassured that in no way would their participation in the research study be used in their parole hearings or early release plans or disclosed to their case management teams.

Therefore, an information sheet and consent form were developed to meet the ethical requirements of the study. The information sheet was designed to inform the collaborators what the purposes of the study were whereas the consent form ensured that the rights of the respondents were protected. Although the consent form formalizes the agreement between the principal researcher and the Native offenders, pressure to participate in the research study existed simply due to the fact that the participants are incarcerated. This is not to say that all Native offenders necessarily agreed to participate, but nevertheless, subtle pressure did exist for them to do so. However, choosing not to participate in the research does not necessarily imply a lack of interest nor commitment to the research process. For instance, one of the participants in the FLIP programs who chose not to be interviewed, continues to actively seek me out when I visit SDC. On each occasion, we have discussed how the research is progressing, and issues about making the transition to the community that initially evolved out of the traditional circle in the FLIP program.

The participants of the research study were Aboriginal. The participants may self-identify themselves as Native, Indian, Metis, Inuit or Aboriginal and still be classified as Aboriginal or indigenous peoples of Canada. However, the study did not address the distinctions of Nativeness as the respondents did not do so directly when they described their experiences during the interview process. The issue of Nativeness and its relationship to how experiences enable residents to make more successful transitions to the community needs to be further studied from an ethnographic perspective. The fact that Native peoples do not belong to a homogeneous group was respectfully acknowledged. To the best of my knowledge, most of the Native ceremonies and rituals practiced at the Stan Daniels Correctional Center are Cree in origin. As a token of respect, I apologize in advance if I unintentionally offended anyone anytime throughout the entire research process.

Collaboration and Data Analysis

Throughout the process of writing the proposal, attending the FLIP program, facilitating interactive focus group and individual interviews and developing the data analysis, I kept regular journal entries and memos. The written dialogues and my intuitive knowledge were invaluable sources that enabled me to link the various stages of the research process together. To begin, I reviewed the transcripts to discover and identify the recurring categories or themes that emerged from the experiences of the collaborators. These categories were reconnected to the field notes that I had reconstructed describing my experiences. The data analysis simply evolved from re-acquainting myself with the collaborative dialogue of the other respondents and reintegrating it with my own experiences of the collaboration. Further collaboration with the other respondents helped to create a suitable framework for the data analysis.

In the final analysis, using a "storytelling" format seemed to fit best with the "Native way" of describing and relating experiences that are meaningful to the Native community. For instance, Elders use stories to tell a tale, teach a lesson, or to

respectfully share the experience of another who may have trod the same path as the listener. In the research study, storytelling was the genre that most closely reflected the experiences described by the collaborators of their journey in the FLIP program. As ethnography seeks to explore the meaning of culture to its participants, what could be more appropriate for Native people than sharing their experiences of reconnecting to themselves and their culture through storytelling?

Chapter Four
THE JOURNEY:
The Footholds of Collaboration

The process of self discovery for the collaborators was an ongoing journey. The journey for the FLIP collaborators is structured throughout the chapter to reflect the value/belief system and lived experience from a Native perspective. A discussion of how the journey began will enable the reader to gain an understanding of the twists and turns that may be encountered in the research experience. The focused group interview initiated the collaborative process. As in the other one to one interviews with the collaborators, I asked the FLIP group to describe their experiences in the FLIP program. Although most of the collaborators participated in both the focused group and individual interviews, their responses in the different settings evoked a qualitatively different dialogue.

The first question, which explored the process of self-discovery, was introduced by the collaborators describing where they come from and their family circumstances. In the Native world view, family concerns precede those of the individual. However, relationships with significant others are also important.

Close knit relationships, families and significant others are the primary focus in Native culture. However, these relationships are influenced by a number of other factors. From the stories shared by the collaborators, their consumption of alcohol, level of education and their experiences in the "system" helped to determine their opportunities for a successful transition to the community. One of the most devastating influences of the system was the underlying code ("being solid") that discouraged residents from disclosing anything about themselves to others. Not surprisingly, the barriers imposed by the system led to the collaborators experience of being silenced and

feeling invisible. The section concludes with stories shared by the collaborators about some of the ways in which they have begun the process of turning themselves around.

The remainder of the chapter considers the nature of the experiences of the collaborators in the FLIP program. The research questions that query the interconnections between the FLIP program and Native culture and spirituality are explored in the reflections shared by the collaborators. Making the transition from an institution with stringent guidelines to another institution with less stringent guidelines created uncertainty in the lives of those who have been conditioned to function in a more structured atmosphere.

SDC encouraged residents to take responsibility for their feelings, decisions and actions. FLIP facilitated the process of residents reconnecting to themselves and their Native identity and spirituality as a means of empowering themselves in anticipation for their return to the community. All of the collaborators interviewed, including the administration, shared similar experiences of the holistic messages of the FLIP program that enabled participants to reframe their lifes' journey.

Cultural and spiritual guidance in the FLIP program was provided by the facilitators, the Elders, rituals, ceremonies, the traditional talking and healing circle and sharing their stories in the community. As a result of their experiences in the FLIP program, the collaborators have reclaimed their Native identity, tradition and spirituality. They have also suggested ways in which the FLIP program could be further adapted. Sharing and healing within the ceremonies, rituals and traditional talking and healing circle has enabled them to achieve a balance which will enhance their re-entry into the community.

Changing Roles in Midstream

The journey from participant observer to principal investigator/collaborator was like venturing into uncharted territory. Although I had listened to the stories of others and they had listened to mine, actually framing a more structured approach with the

other collaborators was rather intimidating. The process of collaboration began with a focus group interview followed by individual open ended interviews.

The Circle Dialogue

The first hurdle to be overcome was the focused group interview. In an earlier research project, (Davis-Patsula & Mogey, 1993) a focus group interview had been attempted. However, background noises on the tape essentially made the tape indecipherable. In this research study, the equipment had been tested, but I was apprehensive about how to start the process of group collaboration. To gain a sense of comfort in the group atmosphere, the smudge was lit and continued to burn throughout the focused group interview.

One of the participants began talking about his weekend pass, so I used that as a format to present the idea of sharing stories about our experiences in FLIP. As I passed out the information sheet and consent form, there was some underlying apprehension about the participants being taped. I reminded them it was up to them and what they were comfortable with. In the end, I suggested we just begin with the Kerchief Kid and his weekend and go from there. During his dialogue, I was so apprehensive I couldn't decide whether I wanted him to go on and on, as he is rather a slow, pensive speaker, or whether I wanted him to stop. I was anxious to find out if anyone else would continue the dialogue.

I ended up asking one of the collaborators if he would speak next. He said, "Why me? I replied, "Because I'm sure you have lots to say about the FLIP program." He chuckled and began. The dialogue he shared included a lot of self-disclosure. He was very committed to what he was sharing. I was worried but his intensity must have inspired the rest of the group because from then on, the dialogue flowed. The collaborators were surprised how quickly the time passed. The tension emanating from my apprehension was gradually dispelled. All the participants in the FLIP group chose to collaborate.

In essence, the group interview acted as a means of closure for the participants in the FLIP group. Although a formal graduation ceremony is held at the conclusion of every program, often the opportunity to reflect and share insights about the program among the participants doesn't happen. The potential for the FLIP group to share meaningfully among themselves prior to graduation could be realized by using a focus group interview.

Steppingstones

Simply setting up the interviews was a challenge in itself. However, carrying through on the established time frame was even more challenging and at times, seemingly impossible. I felt rather reluctant to ask the other participants to collaborate because I really did not know how to go about it. Seldom did the interviews go as initially planned.

I wanted to find a way to obtain their permission to be interviewed, which also respected their right to choose. For me, the issue of making contact with participants appeared to be almost an ideological conflict within myself. I wished to be respectful of their space, and was apprehensive about asking them to share their stories. Simultaneously, I wanted to make the approaches as soon as possible, so that I could get on with the actual collaboration. Probably the most harrowing experience was arranging the first interview. The Inspector was the first person that I asked to be interviewed.

Initiating the One on One Dialogue

Finding out on a Friday morning that the Inspector was being released early on the following Tuesday morning forced me into the position of having to make arrangements quickly if I wanted to talk to him. I laid the groundwork for my request by first telling him that Native offenders had not been asked their opinion about programs like FLIP. I said that I thought that it was really important to find out how participants viewed the program and that was why I was asking the guys in the FLIP program what their experiences were.

Finally, I asked him if he would feel comfortable talking to me about how he saw the FLIP program. To me, this was the significant part of our conversation. He said that he felt okay to talk and share with me because he had seen me make some changes during the FLIP program, too. I felt honored that his decision to share with me was based on the fact that he felt we had shared a common experience in the group. Although it was not explicitly stated by him, I felt that he trusted me.

We then discussed an appropriate time. As we walked into the building, I sort of caught up with him and said, " Oh yeah, is it okay if I tape it?" I had repeated this phrase to myself a number of times in the last few minutes. I was worried that the presence of the tape recorder might be an issue. Audio or video recording of ceremonies or other events is often considered culturally inappropriate; however, circumstances vary by location, tribal affiliation and often the Elder makes the decision. His reply was short and to the point, "No, that's okay." He asked me if I would be asking questions, I said: "No, I preferred that he talk about whatever he felt comfortable to share".

When we met to begin the interview, again he asked, "Are you going to ask me questions"? Again I replied, "No, I want you to talk about what you feel comfortable to share". Before we started the tape, the Inspector said, "Well, I've thought about what I'm going to say. First, I'll talk about my childhood, and then I'll talk about the

FLIP program". So he had really decided on his own agenda in advance. I was pleased I hadn't prepared any structured questions. As I listened to him speak, it was almost like he was talking out loud to himself. He spoke quietly and thoughtfully.

Third Party Collaboration

Another one of the interviews that was rather unique occurred in the presence of a third party at the Remand Center. On the previous weekend, Coyote had not returned from a leisure pass and had ended up in the Remand Center. Wanting to provide an opportunity for him to share his story, I asked the administration at SDC if were possible to interview Coyote as he was part of the FLIP group and his release date was only a matter of days away.

The Stan Daniels Center willingly contacted the Remand Center. The administration at SDC was told by the security chief at the Remand Center that I could interview Coyote if a SDC staff member went with me. I asked one of the staff I knew from collaborating closely with her in previous interviewing. She agreed to accompany me. We arranged to visit the Remand on the following day at 9 o'clock when they begin visiting hours. Although definite advance arrangements with the head of security were made for us to visit the Remand Center; nevertheless, we were detained at the front desk by the guard on duty. He phoned the head of security. Our visit was confirmed. I was very apprehensive about the whole process of visiting and interviewing, as the policy of the Remand Center is strictly regulated in all areas, and visiting is no exception.

At the Remand Center, we were assigned to a glassed in interviewing room with a desk that was bolted down, and three chairs, two behind the desk, and one in front of it. I was going to move the chair out from behind the desk to provide an atmosphere with fewer barriers, but the SDC staff member suggested that to do so might arouse the suspicion of the guards. Coyote came in after about five minutes in white T-shirt and jeans, which seemed to be the standard dress of the Remand Center.

I asked Coyote if he were comfortable to discuss the FLIP program with me. I also mentioned that I would like to tape the interview. I explained that I thought that how the guys felt about the program was important but I could not interview him unless a SDC staff member was present. He seemed rather nonplused by the situation. Coyote was both friendly, and good humored. He said that another person present wouldn't bother him and he was okay with the tape. As with the other collaborators, he asked if I was going to ask questions. I said that I preferred that he just talk about what he felt comfortable to share about his experiences in FLIP. Coyote did make a conscious choice to share his experiences despite the constraints of being in the Remand Center.

> He stated: *"Like with you I have to be myself in order for you to be comfortable. You know it's me that is allowing you to be a part of my world. Because if I didn't let you I would have said okay, that's fine. I wouldn't want you to say anything about what I've done in this program. . . I think that's what this FLIP program has done is to learn to control myself and what I feel inside and what I can show people outside"* (Coyote, p. 29). However, he also expressed: *"But thank you anyway for coming down and talking to me. I needed to get some of that -- just somebody that would understand in what I'm trying to say to somebody"* (Coyote, p. 36)

Indian Time

Daddy Cool was rather reluctant to be interviewed at all. We changed the dates, times and setting of the interview at least four or five times over a two week period. He was very leery of using the tape recorder. Nevertheless, once he began, he seemed to become involved in what he was saying to the point where he forgot about the tape recorder. In fact, after we finished the interview, he exclaimed: "Gee, I didn't realize I had so much to say!"

The other interviews also had their ups and downs. Being flexible, understanding and patient were necessary qualities during the interviewing process.

Not only did the interviews have to be re-scheduled for almost all of the collaborators, but each interview seemed to involve some kind of a trade off. Superman wanted jelly donuts and was anxious to complete the interview as quickly as possible so that he didn't miss out on attending a round dance.

Mutual Collaboration

The interviews with two of the respondents really exemplified a collaborative dialogue. For instance, as Daddy Cool spoke about the impact of reconnecting to spirituality in the FLIP program, he began to share his knowledge of the concept of the cosmos in the Native world view. He shared with me a rather detailed explanation of the idea that everything in Native culture is based on the notion of clockwise movement. In his own words, Daddy Cool related that:

> *A person should never forget about his spiritual life because I know (for) Indian people a spiritual life is a good life. . . Have respect for different lodges -- the Sweat Lodge. Different lodges. Even the powerful lodges there will be respect always to respect. Always do things clockwise. You always do things clockwise. If you smoke your pipe. If you want to turn your pipe. Sometimes you can just pass it like that but if you want to turn it you can turn it clockwise. Everything is clockwise. Our world turns clockwise. Everything turns clockwise so that's how come us Indian people we do things clockwise because that's our belief in that's the way the world turns. The earth turns clockwise. Everything you see turns clockwise. Watches turn clockwise. Car engines turn clockwise. Moon. The same thing. Clockwise. Everything clockwise. If you see a bird flying -- hawk, eagle fly around you will never see them fly anti-clockwise. You will always see them fly clockwise. You watch them.* (Daddy Cool, p. 17)

Daddy Cool was teaching me from the heart of his own teachings. I felt humble as he shared his enthusiasm and knowledge with me. He was so surprised to think that I had never reflected on the clockwise movement of all creation. To him, it was a simple, intuitive, meaningful part of Native culture.

I shared a similar experience with another collaborator. Similarly, the dialogue involved the subject of spirituality. We were discussing how, as Native people, we are often not aware of our traditions and what they mean. I will let his words speak for themselves.

> *I have asked people about this sometimes you know. (They say) that's a very beautiful drum. That's a nice looking drum. When I ask them this drum is the voice of our people. It speaks for us. And we call down the Grandfathers. The Grandfathers. Do you know who the Grandfathers are? Have the Grandfathers ever been taught to you? ("No," I replied.) Grandfathers they are the natural substances of this world. For instance, you have the Grandfather Rock. We call that Grandfather because it is the rock and the natural, the most powerful Grandfather I feel in my teachings is the Tornado. That's a natural element of this earth. It's a Grandfather that is a part of this world. The tree. The grass. The bird. Grandfather Eagle. Every natural being in natural element is a Grandfather, and yes you have the Grandfathers of your ancestors. This drum as you noticed the colors on it. You have the yellow for the Chinese peoples and you have the white for the white people and the red for the Indian people and the blue for the black people. And it's always in four. Spring, summer, fall, and winter. Water, fire, air, wind. The four legged animals, the two legged animals, the two-winged animals and the ones that crawl. The fish. Everything is in four and if you upset that balance this is the drum stand. If you take one away just like the white society try to take away the black people at one time it would upset that balance and that drum would be not good or the Indian people would try to be eliminated at the time and there is no balance there. The balance is upset and this is just our voice saying this who we are.* (Wolf, p. 10)

The four concepts of Native spirituality that Wolf shared during our dialogue together was the meaning of the drum, the role of the Grandfathers, the meaning of balance and the importance of the number four in Native culture. Both Daddy Cool and Wolf were sharing the knowledge gained from the teachings that had been shared with them. I felt honored to share a dialogue with these two collaborators.

Question 1: Self-Discovery

When I asked the other collaborators to share their experiences with me, they ultimately chose what they wanted to share. As the focus of Native culture revolves around family and community, the dialogue was interspersed with their background and family connections that influenced their experiences in FLIP.

Family Pictures

After all, our experiences in life have helped to shape and mold who we are. The dialogue shared by the collaborators included many reflections about their experiences as children, outlining the shadows of their family backgrounds. These issues are seldom discussed among residents, except in programs like FLIP. Most of the collaborators had similar experiences as children and adolescents. As they began to openly share their personal experiences, they became aware of their commonalities.

> For example, Coyote states: *"I think that all of the people that I have met across this time of being incarcerated there is a lot of them out there that have that same problem I've got."* (Coyote, p.5).

The respondents themselves skillfully weave the tapestry of their intricate family relationships simply and eloquently. Excerpts from those who shared the stories about their family background follow.

> *My background, personal. I come from a family of 14. There used to be eight boys and six girls. Lost one sister when she was six years old. . . My parents were alcoholics since I can remember. My grandparents and my uncles and aunts were alcoholic too so I grew up with alcoholics, violence. They were always fighting each other's families. So at the age of 13, 14, I started staying away from home and started going to my Auntie's place on the reserve. She didn't drink but her husband was an alcoholic and I tried to fit into that family because she always wanted to adopt me as a boy, like to get me away from my alcoholic family. But her husband was just as bad so at 14 or 15 years old I stayed with her but her husband used to come out every night and scare all the kids away from the house and she would make*

> *me stay there and help her. A lot of times he came at her with a knife, or with an axe. She would always put me between them and just help him. So I don't know what was worse. My family violence or my Auntie's violence with her husband. . . (As I listened to the stories of others in FLIP) I would remember the hurts and pains that I suffered when I was a kid as I grew up. . . A lot of things hurt me in school and I tried going and talking to my parents but you can't talk to somebody that's drunk. . . I don't remember being told as a kid, "I love you," by my parents. I don't quite remember my childhood either.* (Inspector, p. 1, 3, 18, 21)

Although the extended family network may provide an additional source of support to the family, it may also engender conflicts within the immediate family as well as the wider network. Violence and alcohol abuse may interfere with all aspects of family life. The Inspector expressed that in many ways his family was emotionally unavailable to him.

> *I'm a Metis-Cree Indian from Northern Alberta. I come from a family of 27 children. As I started out my parents were alcoholics. Some of my brothers and sisters were alcoholics at the time. I was born in a small town near Calgary, Alberta and that's where all the shit began. When I was born my mother was drunk. I was abandoned at that time. I was brought into the city by social workers and RCMP. where I was placed in a convent. . . I was placed in 25 foster homes. There I learned how to hate, how to be abused from a foster son, how to be abused from a foster sister, beaten, and plus, my Spirit taken away from me. . . when you are a child you don't know what real love is because my foster parents turned their backs on me. When they showed me love they bought me things. Like I had everything and I had a bike. I had a TV. I had a ghetto blaster. Everything in my room. Pictures. I had money in my pocket every day. But still I believe that was buying love. They were afraid to come face to face with the problem and that was the sexual abuse on us kids. . . You know there is things I could tell you in my past when I was at the foster homes what they would do but the name part wasn't Superman. It was other names but not my real name. I didn't even know I was an Indian.* (Superman, p. 1, 2, 11)

As an infant, Superman experienced abandonment and loss of identity. In the home of his foster family, he was traumatized by sexual abuse and emotional abandonment. According to Superman, material goods are not an acceptable substitute for coping with underlying problems in the family.

> *I was raised up in kind of, I guess dysfunctional family because my folks used to drink. And once in a while they used to fight when they were drinking and I had seen through that in my lives like my folks were every time, but not every time but sometimes when they drink they get into a fight with each other. I figure myself was a normal thing when you have a wife to fight with. I didn't know that for a long time and that's not supposed to be the way to live. . . As soon as I, even as I've grown up my friends they drink. Drink, drink. That's all they know is to drink and nothing else.* (Daddy Cool, p. 2, 3)

Daddy Cool's definition of a normal life was drinking and fighting in the family. As a child, our frame of reference is our immediate and extended family environment. Our experiences as adolescents may only contribute to a repetition of the patterns in adulthood.

> *And I got a lot of hurts out of my inside that I had for a long time on my mother's death and my sister's death -- the cause of the death and you know being abandoned as a young kid and still holding that in for you know going on 25 years. . . I didn't even give my parents a chance too -- my adopted parents to really find out who this little boy was who grew up to be a man and to find out who he really was. They didn't give me a chance either because you know they just expected that I was normal like everybody else which I wasn't. You know all those years of hurt and not being cared for by your real parents. You know at times when I really hated them oh man I had so much hate and misunderstanding of why they did these things to me and why didn't they have me or take care of me or why didn't they love. What didn't I do something wrong? Was I ugly? Was I just uncarable kid or anything like that? . . .And I wish that never would have happened because it's always going to be there. Even when I'm 60 years old I am going to say why did my mother get*

> *shot or why did my mother get murdered when I wasn't there? Why did my sister have a suicide? When I wasn't there I could have helped her or anything like that.* (Coyote, p. 5, 26)

Coyote expressed the frustration he continues to feel with circumstances that were beyond his control. Being abandoned, having his mother and sister die tragically, being adopted and feeling not understood was an overwhelming burden for him to handle. The scars remained.

> *I was raised by my grandparents and my grandparents died. My grandmother died in 1982. My grandfather died in 1987 and before that I went on my own since I was about 15 years old. . . But I've seen quite a few of my real family. We had family problems in the beginning in the 1970s. My mom was separated from my dad and she drank a lot. I remember I used to go live with them here back and forth -- my grandparents and my family and so I am still close with all my brothers and sisters. I love them all. When they separated I can remember when my first dad -- my dad eh, separated with a common-law -- my stepdad for so many years and they have six children and there was about five of us from my Dad's side and there is six from my step dad's side. They separated and that's when my mom moved to a small northern community in Saskatchewan there and find shelter there to raise us. To raise the family up there in that community. She never did drink. She used to go to church a lot. I mean she had a good house. Five bedroom, brand new house and we used to live with you know beside, around her. In the summer time we have our own little shack. You know little tents and then we don't bother her at nights. But that's when that trouble got started there because that place there it was a nice little community. The roads are there but the education was so poor. Real poor education you know.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 3, 5)

Kerchief Kid primarily grew up with his grandparents but nevertheless feels a real attachment to his biological brothers and sisters. Alcohol, frequent moves and the constantly changing family composition characterized Kerchief Kid's childhood experiences.

> *He (my brother) did broke (sic) into a AVC school there. We had a AVC school there and students -- upgrade school. He went and broke in there because he figured there is something there to drink. There is something in there to drink. He knew it too. So I guess he went and broke in there one night and that's when they took that photocopy machine -- that photocopier fluid. That's when he took that stuff and then he got this place there where they could drink so they partied there and there was about 15 people that was involved from there. Maybe 10, 15. There was one old fellow that drank that stuff but he never got affected. A few other people that took him to the hospital and released him the next day. There was about 6 people that died from that. I don't know how much they drank but they you know they all drank the same amount. . . But one of the guys that died there was my oldest brother and he was a real good guy back then. He was a real good friendly guy and I felt sorry for him when, especially the way he died. It was real sad. . . Anyways those six guys that died there but that was in 1986 and I was in jail then.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 5, 6)

Kerchief Kid grieved over the loss of his brother to a incident when his brother and friends drank photocopying fluid. Kerchief Kid recognized that had he not been in jail at the time that he could have been in the same situation.

> *(The director said) "You have to phone your sister. " So I phoned my sister. I knew something had happened right away. I guess my father had passed away there. So that's one thing I had to deal with too and he was only 59 years old when he had a heart attack. A stroke. That's young.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 12)

Experiencing the loss of close family and friends was a recurring tragedy for many Native offenders while this is also a common pattern in Native families in general. However, the loss may be more difficult to come to grips with when you cannot attend the funeral because you are incarcerated. Dealing with the dual effects of the loss itself, and the lack of family support to deal with the loss, exacerbated the situation.

Significant Relationships

Often when the respondents have spent extended periods "doing time" the ties between family members become more and more fragmented. "Doing time" in an institution far away from home only worsens the situation. Often, the more frequently they "do time", the more infrequently they have contact with their families. Consequently, their significant relationships with women become more important. Developing and maintaining a relationship with a significant other was valued by the residents.

Nevertheless, coming from a dysfunctional family background and trying to sustain a relationship presented a whole set of problems. The formative experiences in the family setting primarily dictate what we see as "normal" in establishing significant relationships. Daddy Cool learned from his family experiences that it was "normal" to drink then later to fight with your spouse.

> *And once in a while they used to fight when they were drinking and I had seen through that in my lives like my folks were every time, but not every time but sometimes when they (his parents) drink they get into a fight with each other. I figure myself was a normal thing when you have a wife to fight with. I didn't know that for a long time and that's not supposed to be the way to live.* (Daddy Cool, p. 3)

Superman experienced numerous relationships which he characterized by the phrase "using one another". The pattern of his relationships reflected the lack of intimacy he had experienced as a child and youth.

> *And I had some girls love me. I didn't know what love was. Love to me was between the sheets. That's all I knew. That's the only way I knew how to love and it wasn't even a lust. It was just using one another. You would wake up in the morning and say, "Jesus Christ. Who did I wake up with?" There was that kind of thing. They would go their way and I would go mine and pick up another girl for the night. You know it's just like that for many years. I had an ex I lived with for about eight years but between those*

eight years I went out with about 20 women. (Superman, p. 7)

Another problem that appeared to influence developing and maintaining a relationship was substance abuse, either alcohol or drugs. Primarily, the collaborators shared their problems about alcohol rather than drugs. A few examples of the problems of trying to mix alcohol and relationships follow.

> *(The first time) I got married for the wrong reasons. It didn't last the marriage. I tried to make it work. I tried telling my ex wife I would quit drinking. It didn't work at all. She loved the booze just like I do. I don't know when a person drinks they just don't take care. I didn't care when I drank. My son was about a year old and me and my wife and my uncle -- the three of us got a baby-sitter. And knowing that there was hardly anything to eat in the house, we just left and partied for three days.* (Inspector, p. 5)

> *Relationships never work when you drink. All you do is just making bad feelings for both of you.* (Daddy Cool, p. 4)

> *I always had a found my partner to try and settle down to live with a family and find a common-law wife that would settle down with me. I did come close once to marry them but it didn't work out right and I was still on the booze. I was heavy on drinking.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 1)

In the institutions, your eligibility for parole increased if you were perceived to be involved in a workable relationship. Maintaining community contacts was viewed as a positive step in making a successful transition to the community. However, developing and maintaining a relationship within the restrictions of an institutional setting created another set of problems. Coyote described some of the difficulties from his point of view.

> *That was my very first place (I was incarcerated) was Lethbridge. She was in Camrose. You know that's seven hours drive. And from that day one when I was picked up and arrested the relationship was over because I wasn't there 24 hours. She only saw me three months at a time at*

> *three hour periods. Now that ain't no relationship. The only relationship is I think I love you in a letter or how are you doing? I hope you are doing fine. I can't wait until you get out and stuff like that and that's not a relationship. It really isn't. I think like myself that I realize that when I went from that day one I knew that it was over because. I mean I would. If my wife went in and got incarcerated for a year and I know I wouldn't wait because there is no love there no more. The thing of negative it's gone. It's not there no more. I mean I don't blame her for leaving either because it was me that left. It was my own fault. I drank and I drove and I got charged and I got charged for it and I'm gone. Now she found somebody else that she says that she loves. That's fine. I'm happy for her. I know that's great because I know I would do it if she was gone for a year. I mean I would find somebody else. Darn rights I would because I need affection too.* (Coyote, p. 23)

As a way of encapsulating how attitudes and behavior can change as a result of new knowledge and experiences, as in the FLIP program, Daddy Cool and the Inspector commented about how they currently view close relationships. Then Coyote described the process of how his attitude towards significant relationships has changed. He shared how he viewed relationships previously and how he sees a relationship developing now and in the future.

> *If I am going to have relationships I am going to have a woman that can help me along to stay sober and stay sober with each other and live day after day and try to make the best of it we can. . . If one person wants to have a relationship it's going to have quit that bottle and live their normal life because when a person drinks it's not a normal life. That's a normal life when you drink. There is nothing normal about drinking.* (Daddy Cool, p. 4)

> *I can talk to my wife because she has been through alcohol and family violence. . . It is easier to talk to a person when you know you can trust them. Because if I didn't trust my wife I wouldn't be able to talk to her. I wouldn't be able to say I love you and really mean it. Honesty and trust.*

> *(Before) I was just saying it and not doing it.* (Inspector, p. 22, 23)

> *I mean before -- like now when I went into a relationship it seemed like you know well everything should take care of itself. You are a family now. And it doesn't work that way. You have to work at it, and it's not as easy as what normal families of today do. It's a lot of headache. And it's a lot of hurt and it's a lot of misunderstanding and this is what I'm talking about now is when I go into a relationship now you know it's so funny because I'm starting out as a friend. I'm not starting out as a sexual partner and I've never done that. I've gone out with a lot of girls and it always started at the zipper. It never started at the top of the head and this relationship is going to go a long ways because it's starting with my head. It's not starting with my zipper. . . I've never heard a relationship being like that where you take time into working at it. I've never done that before. Usually I was always being part of the thing in the social group of who can get into whose pants first?* (Coyote, p. 11, 14)

"Conditions of Release: Abstain from Alcohol and Drugs"

Most of the official release documents that refer to Native residents, including temporary absences, day parole and mandatory releases specify that the individual "abstain from alcohol and drugs[14]. This is only a minor example of how problematic alcohol and drugs are perceived to be for Natives by the criminal justice system. Nonetheless, the collaborators themselves also perceive substance abuse to be a major stumbling block. It permeates all aspects of their lives: family ties, significant relationships with spouses and peers, relationships with their children, employment and lifestyle. The comments from the collaborators express the overwhelming impact of being involved with addictive substances. For these respondents, the institution and alcohol are interrelated. Alcohol use in the Native community is not involved in

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[14] Many of the crimes committed by Native offenders are alcohol-related. Therefore, the official release documents of Native residents often state that neither alcohol or drugs are to be consumed or ingested as one of the conditions of release.

occasional social interaction but instead appeared to be an all encompassing lifestyle. The collaborators described how alcohol use affects relationships with significant others; spouse, children, extended family and peers.

> *The friends that I thought I had there they are not friends you know. They are people you just can't trust.* (Daddy Cool, p. 6)

> *If you want to make a living or if you want to live or if you want to survive you just got to stay away from the booze because that's the one major problem here in Alberta. It's the alcohol for Natives.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 6)

> *And if you have friends that don't even respect what you are trying to do I guess they are not friends. It's the same thing as being an alcoholic. They don't expect me to try and quit just for that. I don't need that kind of a friend.* (Inspector, p. 31)

> *As soon as I even as I've grown up my friends they drink. Drink, drink. That's all they know is to drink and nothing else. They will keep on drinking and drinking and drinking and if they want to drink they would come to my place.* (Daddy Cool, p. 6)

> *I had a lot of chances to take something (programs) to work (on myself) but I've been stuck with this bottle for 21 years.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 7)

> *Relationships never work when you drink. All you do is just making bad feelings for both of you. But when you are not drinking you don't get a bad feeling. You always feel good because there is no things to get mad at each other for. When you drink there is always something. It's just an excuse to get mad at you -- like people that live together in a relationship. There is always an excuse. If you want a person to start something. It's always like that. It never works right. If one person wants to have a relationship it's going to have quit that bottle and live their normal life because when a person drinks it's not a normal life. That's a normal life when you drink. There is nothing normal about drinking. A lot of people -- sure maybe it's normal for them*

because a lot of people can drink sociably but most of the people that I know they don't drink sociably. They drink to get drunk. And I was the same way too. I drank to get drunk, not to sociably (be sociable). (Daddy Cool, p. 4)

You know the jail taught me well. Come down to the drag and start doing drugs and doing heroine at 12 years old you know. And speed back then and M.D.A. but this is where I knew I could score money to pay for everything. (Superman, p. 6)

But I know I had a problem with drinking. I know how hard I tried to quit. I just wasn't strong enough to quit. I tried quitting once and my family knew I tried. I was sincere at quitting. I went to visit one Aunty and there just happened to be a party there. I seen my Mom here I just come out of a year and a half or two years. My Mom passed me a drink and I said, "No thanks. I'm trying to quit. I'm tired of it." She turned around and said, "Well if you don't want to drink that means you don't love me." That hurt quite a bit. She started crying and I couldn't take it so I used to think, I tried my best with just a few simple words. It made me drink again. So that really put me back in jail. (Inspector, p. 4)

They (others in society) just think you're alcoholic and that's it. You are a trouble maker and you go to jail. Even in jail the caseworkers they don't care to listen to your problems. . All they care about is writing up their reports about your attitude in jail and in society. They don't give a shit about whether you are an alcoholic or not. Why do you have these problems? They don't care. (Inspector, p. 14)

Choosing to lead a spiritual life grounded in Native culture seemed to be one way that collaborators chose to deal with their substance abuse problems. Some of their comments are both moving and inspiring.

I have lost that for years and years in my life that I used to be (an) Elder's helper years ago when I was nine. But I forgot that too because of my drinking. My drinking was too powerful. It takes me away empty. Now today I'm back into this, an Elder's helper again. That made me feel really good. I'm continuing doing that and I never want to see that bottle

> *driving me, and dealing dope. . . And from my part they can keep their liquor. I don't need it. I want to walk another road and I want to keep up a good life and start to live now. That's all I've got to say.* (Daddy Cool, PWII, p. 23)

> *If we had the real meaning of the culture inside us today we wouldn't be here because our culture doesn't have alcohol. It doesn't have drugs. And that's what it's all about. Family living through the program. We are living the culture. We are walking it. We are walking with our family. When you say all my relations it means all of us together. All Aboriginal people and we improve it every day because we have the faith of what is ahead of us. But today we keep on struggling which is good. I know a lot of people will be there for me and be there for you. You just have to respect it and accept it. We have to accept what's inside our hearts. Every morning there is one saying and I say to the Creator and the Grandfather just to help me stay sober and walk a good way today. Those Grandfathers are something that I always tell the young people that when they pray they have to walk that prayer because the grandfathers are there to guide you and give you knowledge of what you went through the day. But those Grandfather, there is a bottle of beer in front of me. Those Grandfathers won't put it up to my mouth you know. They will show me what's inside my heart and make those feelings say, hey you're the one that's going to take that drink if you want it. It's not the Grandfathers. When I pray I say, help me Grandfathers to stay sober. I'm really asking myself to help me so in order to stop I don't have to take that alcohol. I don't have to put that bottle to my lips because I believe my prayer and I ask for help. It's me that has to help me too. I have to do 99% of that prayer.* (Superman, PWII, p. 14)

Personal Perceptions of Education

Frequently, education has been perceived as a panacea that will redress the social situation of Native peoples, including their over representation in the criminal justice system. Some of the respondents perceivedthat education reflected their lived experience of the process of becoming educated. Others perceived education as a

source of knowledge, while still others saw education as an institution and some were aware of both perspectives. Their comments are eclectic and insightful.

Education: The Institution

Throughout the dialogue with Kerchief Kid, he mentioned education a number of times. He was the only collaborator who expressed that a lack of education was a problem both that affected the individual (job skills and certificates) and the community (lifestyle).

> *The education was so poor. Real poor education you know. Us guys like we would drop out in grade two and stuff like that. There's too much trouble and the teachers are kind of slow. They are not taking care of us that much. Well they tried their best but there are too many kids running around and there's only two teachers and it's one little class there. They are all grade one to nine eh. All the class together. There's not that many people then back then eh.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 5)

> *The only problem I seen in that place was a lack of education. I tried to go back to school when I was 16 but I dropped out again. I started going out all night. Now I miss my education today. I am having a tough time to get my jobs and certificates that I'm holding.* (Kerchief Kid, PWII, p. 4)

> *And the education was not there. That's the main problem. It's not all the education that can be blamed too but it's the way you live I guess.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 6)

Education: Source of Knowledge

One of the collaborators related his view of education. He saw life as his teacher, and was rather suspicious of "book learning". In his experience, he has been judged by professionals on the basis of "book learning" that to his mind just *does not fit* with his experience. "Real" learning and education was from others who share their life stories. "Real" education was also intuitive knowing, learning and healing yourself.

I think in order to heal we have to sit in a group like this. This group setting because everyone shares part of their life and feelings, their hurts, their anger, and their hate. In order to grow we have to release a lot of that and through the years -- the 26 years that I've done in institutions I was educated in the field in the street and institutions. (Superman, PWII, p. 8)

We shared our feelings, our past and some were ignorant because they were probably brought up in the white man's way where the books tell the truth. They have a lot of things that they say in the books and they believe in that way because they actually didn't feel what we went through. It doesn't tell you how we feel in a book and I'm totally against that. If I want to learn. If I want to educate myself I have to talk to other people and hear their story and their life because I can relate to that. They themselves are the books that I learned from. I can't learn that from a book and I can't learn what sexual abuse is because all they do is give you a label like saying well, he's been abused. Well how does that book tell me how he was my life, anger, the fear, the pain and all those resentments I carried for many years because those books tell you that. It doesn't. (Superman, PWII, p. 9)

I've sat in programs at RPC at Saskatoon Regional Centre in some psychiatric ward where violent people go and we sit there and share our life with psychiatrists and psychologists. I sit there and I have mixed feelings because they read from their books and they don't understand my feelings because they've never felt them and so they label me with what they read in their books. I don't agree with that. (Superman, PWII, p. 8)

I don't want to live in fear anymore that I'm on the street. And the knowledge that I've gained isn't very much but it's enough to be able to keep me going for this day to be sober because I can remember. I've learned a lot of stuff. I learned a lot in the institutions and I've learned a lot when I was a child. I learned what the pain was, the pain, the anger you know. The lack of trust, the lack of honesty hurted my family, and hurted my friends. I learned many, many things. I'm well educated. They only had grade 11 and

> *that was in 1968 when it was the last time I went to school, but hey.* (Superman, PWII, p. 16)

The collaborators spoke of education as a source of knowledge and enlightenment - to help parents with their children and to transmit lived experience to adolescents on the "street".

> *But I guess it really has to start with the parents to teach the parents how to be able to talk to their kids. Educate the parents through programs on the street, for the husband, for the wife.* (Inspector, PWII, p. 26)

> *And I think well I've got to do something because those little kids are supposed to be our leaders tomorrow, and I truly believe that. We have to reach out with what we learned from these programs and relate it to the little ones. . . We were taught in the right ways through the programs like the FLIP, like Life skills, Familyships, Living Improvement Programs I've taken before. Let's go out and do that. Let's go to schools and tell them our stories.* (Superman, PWII, p. 11, 12)

Education: The Possibilities

However, one of the collaborators did have a positive experience in educational institutions. When he completed his high school education, he viewed it as the end of a phase. But now he sees things differently. Coyote perceives education as a bridge that will enable him to make a more successful transition into the community.

> *I graduated when I was 16 years old. I got a certificate from school. I was the second Native in Canada to actually graduate at 16 years at a 98 point average. . .When I first learned that I was 16 years old and I graduated I didn't even have any second thoughts about going to NAIT. I was always -- when we got there the way to do it was when you graduated you got a job. You got a truck. You got an apartment or a trailer and you worked for a living. You started going and you got married at 18, 19 years old and got a kid. I did all that and I wished (now) I did go to school. I wished I did because the family said, "Well you've*

done your 12 years and that's it. Go to work. Start making a living for yourself. (Coyote, p. 33)

Yes. It's deadly. I got so many highways and bridges to cross it's hilarious. Like I told the ladies over there there is a long highway and I'm the Porche and I'm flying. I'm going to keep going and that's me. I'm going to be going across and finding out different things. My education, my culture . I got to get my language back. (Coyote, p. 34)

Frequently, the collaborators did not seem to view the institution of education as a pathway for themselves. Possibly, it may not appear to be a realistic, attainable goal given their past experiences in the school system. Education that was meaningful from the "Native Way" of viewing the world was seen as valuable.

"Memories in Jails"

In the institutions, certain words or phrases are familiar to those who understand the prison culture. One that was frequently used is the "system". "System", in general, referred to the criminal justice system. The "system" may include: everyone in the institution; from security guards, to administrative staff, case workers or psychiatrists, and to other inmates or residents. The term, "system" may also refer to the procedures and policies that set the guidelines for acceptable behavior for those in custody. Everyone or everything can be suspect. Each individual collaborator developed different mechanisms for coping with the "system". Reactions ranged from a rather pragmatic acceptance to dislike to differing degrees of anger and/or bitterness. The following dialogue from the collaborators referred to the influence that spending anywhere from 5 to 30 years in the "system" had on the way that they perceived themselves and their life world.

This prison system sucks. All you think about is you did it and that's it and you are going to jail. You didn't want to look at your alcoholism and why a person drinks and why they get into trouble. They don't look at that. I think all these years I've been in jail. I just feel guilty. I tried to tell my lawyer I had a real bad problem with drinking. Give

> *me a life outside. Even he didn't want to listen. . . I guess years ago if they had programs like this maybe there would be a lot of people wouldn't be here today in the system.* (Inspector, p. 9, 14)

The comments from Coyote addressed how the "system" functions in an impersonal, inflexible and insensitive manner, especially in relation to those who are not part of the "system".

> *You are no longer a person: Coyote . You are a number: 123456. Please enter the system. Your room is number 12, top bunk. Clean it up. Make sure it's clean and that's it. When you call your number you shall run to the door. I think the system itself is a hurting system. Not to the people that are running it. It's the people that make the system like the politicians themselves who don't understand when they come into the system they look at it and they walk through the system. There is a whole bunch of inmates in a section of a room and they say, "Well they look all right. They look all right." But they are not all right. They are just sitting in there wondering where am I going today? Am I going to Lethbridge? Am I going to Grande Cache? Am I going to Peace River or anything like that? They don't know who the people are and that's the problem with some of these places.* (Coyote, p. 8)

In fact, the residents have some degree of control over their transfers but often residents may not be fully aware of the choices that are available. However, circumstances differed in each case. But from what Coyote said, as an *individual* in the *system* you *perceive* yourself as *powerless*. In the quote below, the difficulties of trying to develop a sense of personal responsibility in the light of the policies and procedures of the institution was obvious.

> *You have to get up at this time. You have to wash your hair or have a shower at this time. I have been doing that for a long time and I don't hate the people for doing. I just hate myself for (putting myself in institutional settings and) doing that to myself.* (Coyote, p. 9)

Not only do the written policies and the procedures of the institution lessen the opportunities for developing a sense of responsibility but the unwritten "code" of the institution discouraged authentic responses to everyday life in the institution. The "system" initiated the newcomers to ensure the "code" was respected and perpetuated.

> *So what happens in Spy Hill three bikers they sat me down and I had a lot of fear eh. I was wondering what these guys want. But they sat me down and they taught me about the institution and about the jail system. You know the basic things -- you don't rape girls. You don't touch children. You don't rat out on anybody. You don't talk to guards. They have a line and you don't need to cross it. If you do then it is a fight you know. They don't take shit from anybody. No man no matter how old and how tough he is, you fight for your life. So they kept on teaching me. I kept on learning more and more about the criminal life and I learned it well. You know how to rob from people. You know how to set up girls so they could rob them. And when I got out I was a man now. I had been in jail. You know the jail taught me well.* (Superman, p. 7)

As described above, the "system" was reinterpreted by the residents to ensure their survival. The control imposed by the official "system" was superimposed by an informal "system" acknowledged by residents and renamed "doing your own time" or "being solid". In prison lingo: you do not hear, or see anything that goes on. In other words, you isolated yourself from others, and minded your own business. Generally, it was not safe to share how you thought or felt with others and you did not intercede on their behalf. For instance, inmates have shared stories about having to remain outwardly composed while witnessing the stabbing of a fellow inmate. Thus, inmates are not encouraged to develop supportive, trusting relationships.

> *I heard a lot about penitentiaries. . . You see tough men go in there thinking they are tough men. Some of them walked out wearing dresses. Some of them are six feet under and many are crippled today. You are not tough in life. You may think you are tough but you're not. You are human. Some of us wear many, many masks. We have to put a mask on today in*

> *a penitentiary and even on the street. Hey, I'm Mr. Toughguy. Don't fool around with me. You put on that image. But really you are hurting but you have to protect yourself.* (Superman, PWII, p. 16)

The word "system" evoked a powerful reaction from some of the collaborators. They felt that it has overwhelmingly influenced their lives. Although Superman phrased his reply very matter of factly, there was much feeling and intensity behind the words.

> *When you talk about systems, well I've been in four systems I believe I can actually say. One is Social Services and one is institutions. One is the 'street' and one is my own.* (Superman, p. 1)

Superman reeled off the four systems that have combined to influence the way he sees himself and his world. Where these four systems begin and end was almost impossible to determine. The "code" of the institutional system extended beyond the reaches of the prison walls into the mind set of the residents whether they be institutionalized or temporarily on the "street" . The "drag" was the habitat of the resident on the outside if he continued to pursue a criminal lifestyle. In essence, the institution and the street became a "two way system", one feeding on the other.

> *Come down to the drag and start doing drugs and doing heroine at 12 years old you know. And speed back then and M.D.A. but this is where I knew I could score money to pay for everything. So that's where my life begins is at the drag area. This is where I spent most of my life. I guess year after year I lived off women. I lived off welfare. I lived off old man that passed out and I could rob them. I lived off young guys I could rob. Take their few dollars that they had so I could crank up you know boot up heroine. Cocaine. Whatever there was on the street I did. I would get women to work on the street. I would beat them up but I would sort of tell them in a boy's way and say, "If you don't do it I'm going to kill you." And say things to people like that and they did it. They did it well.* (Superman, p. 7)

> *That's where I found my living -- how to live on the streets or in the communities. I learned it from my youth with the other criminal or young offenders you see. You get to know each other and then we would talk about how to do this and that. You know it's kind of a, for a newcomer it's pretty -- really I don't know how to put it but for me maybe I should have tried and stayed out of trouble right away after the first one but instead I said hey, this is the way I guess I choose to live on the streets. Steal and you know rob.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 3)

Although the "two way system" became confining, breaking down the barriers posed a personal risk to those who bucked the system. Putting on a mask ensured protection and survival.

> *You may think you are tough but you're not. You are human. Some of us wear many, many masks. We have to put a mask on today in a penitentiary and even on the street.* (Superman, PWII, p. 16)

> *Too risky because around that negativity 24 hours a day and you always have to constantly keep a guard up on it. And if you let that guard open and then okay, I will tell you how I'm feeling. That is perceived as a weakness and they zero in on that and brrrr! I will take everything he's got. And that's the way it is. So that's more or less a survival tactic, not to feel.* (Wolf, p. 11)

Coyote described a conversation he had with his roommate in the Remand Center. The roommate was blaming the "system" for (his) being in the "system". Coyote finally said:

> *Stop blaming everybody. Look at yourself. . . Actually it just came out naturally because I think too many times and too often a time people are lying to you so many times in a place that's so confined. And I think that they need to put those hundred masks on in order to be accepted in a crowd of people that don't understand each other or who they are. And I think they need some sort of identity at that time to be who they are.* (Coyote, p. 7)

The anonymity and lack of accountability of those in the "two way system" was ensured if the two way "code of silence" of the system continued to be observed. But what happens, when, as Coyote suggested, one wants to reconnect, reaffirm or re-establish our identity? In the following two quotes, neither Superman, nor the Inspector wanted to return to the fear and violence of the streets or the institutions. Superman suggested that paying attention to the reconnection between our head and hearts tells us the direction to take. The Inspector believed that having someone to talk to who understood might help to lessen the feelings of powerlessness and enable them to also begin to change their lives.

> *Do I want to live that way again? No way. I don't want to live in fear anymore that I'm on the street. . . you know what you feel in your heart, go for it because it is telling you the truth. Many of us don't listen to that. We listen to our minds. Our mind gets so confusing at times. Many of thoughts come in there but the true thing is what our hearts tell us what direction to take.* (Superman, PWII, p. 16)

> *And having somebody to talk to might change them around -- their way of thinking. Because I've seen a lot of violence in jail. I've seen a lot of gang rapes in jail. It's pretty scary being there. . .If you want to help that young person you can't. Because when I was in the Remand here this last year my roommate really got beat up pretty bad. I just stood there and watched somebody else and not being able to do anything because if you tried to do something it would happen to you too. That's one of the reasons why I want to change my life around. I'm sick and tired of seeing that life and a lot of violence. Memories in jails.* (Inspector, p. 16)

Silence and Invisibility

Surviving intact within the criminal justice system was almost always accomplished by "being solid" or following the "code." In practice, "being solid" was the residents' way of co-existing in the "two way system" that pervaded institutional life. As the Inspector mentioned, as an individual you feel powerless and incapable of bucking the system.

> *I just stood there and watched somebody else and not being able to do anything because if you tried to do something it would happen to you too.* (Inspector, p. 16)

> *(My first night) I seen five guys coming towards my cell and I figured oh, oh here we go. You know I went against the wall because I was paranoid. I heard a lot about penitentiaries. But they passed mine and went to this guy's cell next to me. All you could hear is screaming. The Guard was stabbed about 14 times and he's laying there and I'm sitting in the next cell just about pooping my pants. That's how much fear I had inside of me. Because they don't fool around in there. . . You may think you are tough but you're not.* (Superman, PWII, p. 16)

"Being solid" meant remaining indifferent to the environment around you in all possible ways. In the institution, "being solid" and the "code of silence" meant you did not share your fears, or feelings with others. Survival involved wearing a mask.

> *Inside the Max everybody is just shut, no feelings to be shown here. But if they show any feelings then somebody is just going to step on it and they are going to get hurt inside.* (Wolf, p. 10)

> *We have to put a mask on today in a penitentiary. . . Hey, I'm Mr. Toughguy. Don't fool around with me. You put on that image. But really you are hurting but you have to protect yourself.* (Superman, PWII, p. 16)

A number of collaborators felt the need to be listened to and heard by others. From their point of view, not being listened to pervaded the entire institutional system to a greater or lesser extent. Coyote mentioned the difficulty of being up front with

other residents. From their reactions, he realized that talking to others about his current feeligs was unexpected, but nevertheless, they admired his courage in saying what was on his mind.

> *Because I think everybody needs somebody to listen and somebody to say something like why am I hurt today? Why am I misunderstanding why they gave me this charge? Why am I going for eight months for misunderstanding of maybe even a common assault to a robbery or even to a theft of $50 from your mom? Why is this happening? And I was talking and I went through about five room mates and each one of them as they left they shook my hand. I think the reason of having a plain old conversation about what the problem is instead of saying you know it's cool that you are my room mate and I need to talk to you or this or that. It was like my name is Coyote. I'm in here for this and I'm leaving here on Monday and I talked to him about this FLIP program and how I started out and how it ended and this is where I'm at now.* (Coyote, p. 6)

The Inspector also felt strongly that throughout his various stages of incarceration, he didn't really have anyone to talk to. Elders, psychiatrists and caseworkers seemed to be unavailable. According to the Inspector, what was really needed was sharing with someone who has the same lived experience; who understands where you're coming from. The underlying issue seemed to be that if you shared how you were really feeling and how things were really going for you there would be consequences that could be negative if you shared your experiences with others.

> *You don't have anybody in the prison system to really talk to. Nowadays they have Elders but they don't really make it easy for you to see them. But they have Elders and they have a psychiatrist too but they don't feel comfortable talking to those people because they don't know anything. They have never been through that role of alcohol abuse and violence. None of them have been through it. The odd one come from an alcoholic family but he's never really has to be in prison all his life. They need more people (to work or*

be involved) in the prison system that have been through it themselves. All these people that are trying to change and stay out (need) to go intc a prison and talk to somebody in there that is really hurt because I've been in there and I've been really hurting and wanting to talk to somebody. Nobody there to talk to. And you keep it all inside bottled up. The negative thinking and negative attitude and you don't care about much about lots of things. You get out and go back to drinking and get in trouble. Having people maybe from this place too are ones that are really sincere in quitting and changing their lives to go out and just to talk to somebody in jail. (Inspector, p.15)

They (others in society) just think you're alcoholic and that's it. You are a trouble maker and you go to jail. Even in jail the caseworkers they don't care to listen to your problems. . All they care about is writing up their reports about your attitude in jail and in society. They don't give a shit about whether you are an alcoholic or not. Why do you have these problems? They don't care. (Inspector, p.14.)

So sometimes I kind of wonder and think that this institutions and the correctional jails in Alberta are supposed to be for rehabilitation eh. (Kerchief Kid, p. 6.)

Are you listening and really hearing? It was humbling and inspiring to experience the courage, determination and perseverance of the collaborators to escape the clutches of the criminal justice system and begin the process of turning themselves around, in spite of the overwhelming odds against them.

Turning Yourself Around

Reframing

For the collaborators in FLIP, turning yourself around may be initiated by any one of a number of triggers. Turning points have been instrumental in helping the respondents to reexamine the paths of their lives and change themselves. The quotes of the collaborators focus on specific events that resulted in a new understanding of their lived experience. For Superman, his dialogue and connection to an Elder brought about a spiritual awakening. Through his experiences with Elders and spirituality, he has reframed his life's journey.

> *But in 1987 I was sitting in the Remand Centre and I didn't know what I was doing in there. Not for a charge for what I was up on and I started thinking back and why I was charged for first degree murder. But the pain and the anger and the hates and all those words at the time I felt -- it was just a big buildup. And when the person died you know I think everything stopped that time. My whole life stopped. That was my turning point.* (Superman, p. 14)

Reflecting on his actions, Superman felt remorseful about the previous actions he had committed. He did not know which way to turn. However, one of his ex-wives stuck by him. She suggested that turning to his culture was a possibility to consider.

> *It was a big change in my life. You know I hurt a person. I really hurt a person. I took a person's life. I was sitting in the Remand Centre you know and taking pills you know. When they stopped giving me pills I would slash up. I wouldn't commit suicide. I would just slash up because I know they would give me pills then. They put me on a psychiatric ward and give me valiums and halcium and there it was okay because I didn't want to think who Superman was and what he did. One of my ex's I still respect her today for what she did for me. She stayed through the whole trial. Through the whole thing and she said, "You have to do something for yourself. I can't help you. You won't allow me in. But you are a man. You are an Indian.* (Superman, p. 14)

> *I said, "Yes. So big deal. Is that going to free me from 25 years inside the institutions? . . . I said, "Where in the hell am I going to get help? Are you going to take my charge." She said, "I don't mean that way. I mean because of your culture. You never listen to me Superman but today do it because I hate to see you going through all this garbage what you are going through today..* (Superman, p. 14)

Eventually, Superman was persuaded to contact an Elder. At first, he was cynical and distrusting. Gradually, he was able to listen and reflect. The wisdom of the Elders' words and the teachings of the culture enabled Superman to develop another framework for looking at himself, his behavior and attitudes.

> *I always had a wish and I say, well I never want to die in the institutions. . .She would come back day after day you know and I wasn't really that ignorant. She come back. She said, "I can't stand it no more. You are pushing me away and the only person in your life that understands who you are today." She says, "Here. Phone this person." It was an Elder. She said, "She will help you because I can't. At least respect who you are and respect the old people. That's a gift from us. We have to respect our old people. We have to help them." "No old person helped me when I was on the street you know and they certainly ain't going to help me now because I robbed from them." She said, "You are wrong there." So just by chance I did take that chance. I phoned this lady and I didn't know who in the hell she was down in Northern Alberta. And she says, "Who are you?" I called collect. I says, "I'm calling collect. I'm supposed to talk to you. I don't know who you are." I said, "And I don't really know why I am talking to you." She says, "Yes. What's your name?" I said, "Superman."* (Superman, p. 14)

The Elder told Superman that she was expecting him to call. The Elder was down to earth and direct in stating that if he didn't want to continue living in institutions, he needed to look at himself. She began by reminding him of his connection to Mother Earth.

> *(The Elder), she says, "Oh yes. I knew you were going to come to me." She said, "The Grandfathers told me some man needs a lot of help." I said, "Don't lie to me." I says, "My girlfriend." She says, "No. I just told her to give you the number because I knew that you were going to call me." And I don't know about that eh. When I think of it I guess old people do know. You know the Grandfathers do tell them a lot of things and that time I really didn't know. I says, "Yes. Right." She said, "Superman," she said. "You know I am only going to say one thing to you. Dummy up." You know I laughed at that eh. She says, "You can be the tough guy that you want to be for the rest of your life but if you want to do it that way you will be in jail for the rest of your life also. So dummy up and listen.* (Superman, p. 14)

The Elder was able to relate to Superman because she also had some lived experience on the "street". Empathizing with his pains, resentments and fears, she shed tears on his behalf. The Elder also reminded him of his inner child and the nurturing that was long overdue.

> *She said, "Now you tell me. You look outside and you tell me what you see out there." And I looked outside and I told her what I see. Just like this today you know. People walking by. A clear blue sky and the grass and you know the cars driving by and people holding hands walking by the Remand. And she says, "What is that?" I says, "I don't know." She says, "Look again." And I looked again and she said, "That's beauty out there." I said, "Oh?" She said, "You are part of that beauty even if you don't want to be." She says, "You are part of that beauty." And she says, "You have to start realizing that." And she started crying on the phone.* (Superman, p. 14)

> *She says, "You know I love you. You are my son. I have many sons." And I said, "Well why?" She said, "Because you are finally starting to be yourself. You have a lot of pain in there. You have a lot of resentments and you don't know what to do with them. They are hurting but you have to play that role. But you don't have to play it no more. You don't have to do that. You know when I was your age I used to do the same thing. I was on the street too, Superman. I was a*

> *hooker," she said. "I drank. I did drugs and I lived off men and I did it well. Today when I look at you I can see myself in you. When I talk to you I can hear the tremor in your voice and you are little kids yet. You are starting to be that little kid. You have so much fear in you and you don't want to do anything about it. But it's about time you did." So she said, "Listen."* (Superman, p. 15)

The Elder related her own story of how she turned her life around. She suggested that he needed programs and the tools which they help to develop to enable him to change himself. The Elder asked him to take his time, and ask the Grandfathers for help and guidance.

> *And (the Elder) told me a story about the change in her life and she said, "You need programs. No matter if the white man's program is there, grab it because you are not there for the white man. You are there for yourself. You are there for the tools." And I said, "What are tools?" She said, "The things that you need to be able to survive out in society." And I said, "Oh it doesn't matter to me. I will be in jail for the rest of my life." She said, "Superman. Stop. You are not going to be in jail the rest of your life. I know that right now. If you want to change your life you can change it now." I said, "How?" She said, "You go to yourself. You pray. And when you are finished praying you come back and you phone me. Don't come back right away. You talk to them." "Well," I said. "Who do I talk to?" "Talk to the Grandfathers."* (Superman, p. 15)

Superman reframed his way of looking at the world. He reconnected to the Native way and began to develop tools and begin to heal. The Elders enabled him to initiate the process of turning himself around by connecting to the culture and exploring his inner self.

> *But today I do because I am still healing from it and I will be healing for the rest of my life for taking that life. But that's where the turning point started. . . All those words I'd never heard before in the right way. He said, "You have to find out who you are." "And how do you find out?" "Well you have got to share what's inside you because there is a lot of*

pain that we carry and lot of us are ashamed to speak of it." And when I talk of that I only used to bring out what was on the surface but then my Elders came in and I started learning from it and that's where the real healing started. After talking to them. (Superman, p. 18)

Time and Spirituality

Turning yourself around may also be a gradual process that culminates in a realization that we can heal our yesterdays but not change them. Both Daddy Cool and Grey Eyes have spent between twenty and thirty years in and out of institutions. They have both realized that time doesn't stand still. To lighten their journeys for today and tomorrow, they have chosen spirituality as their foundation.

Number one, the clock has already started ticking. It doesn't wait for you. I thought about that too. . . First things first is a Native spirituality and I have to go easy with my life. Be gentle with myself. I can't rush into things I don't understand. I can't go to places and do things that I don't know or where I am really going to. I used to try and catch up with a lot of things when I was inside. I felt I was left behind you know. . . My values, culture, my traditions, spirituality. Those are all important for me. My language, family, friends. (Grey Eyes, PWI, p. 1, 2)

You know I never want to get old eh. That's the part I had in me. I figured I never want to get old. I figure I'm going to stay young all the time. I guess I made a mistake. Now I am getting quite up there and now I want to change me. I want to change my life. I want to live a decent life now. I'm not going to spend the rest of my life in prison you know. I've been crazy but now is now. Now is I've got to change to be a different person. Not to be the same person as I was. . . A person should never forget about his spiritual life because I know Indian people a spiritual life is a good life. When you believe in your spiritual life going to Sweat and different lodges, Sun Dance Lodges and stuff like that you like fast like that and spiritual -- Grandfathers. There is Grandfathers. You never forget Grandfathers. Every time you smoke your pipe you smoke with your Grandfathers even though you don't see them you smoke with your

> *Grandfathers. And also the Great Spirit. The Creator himself, and some guys have never forget that spiritual life -- an Indian way of life. That's because it is I guess a powerful thing and it is a very, very powerful thing to be to know your spiritual life. It's a very, very powerful thing in an Indian way of life. It's really powerful. If you are a very, very powerful spiritual man you can talk to your Grandfathers and they will talk back. You can hear them. A lot of people around you they can't hear them but you can hear them talk to you back because that's the Spirits talking to you -- Grandfathers you know. If you ask your Creator for something that you really want you will always get that. The Creator will never look away from you.* (Daddy Cool, p. 4, 15)

Turning Yourself Around: In Stages

Turning Yourself Around may also be an ongoing process of experiencing turning points that lead you from one stage to another in your growth and development as a person. The stories of both the Inspector and Kerchief Kid are examples of this process. The Inspector experienced what he considered to be a revelation in his bunk in the Remand Center. He was awaiting trail and expected to receive a long "stretch."[15]. He had constructed a homemade tool to cut his throat and was saying his good-byes. The encounter with *Manitowa(h)* "awakened" him. He humbly asked for the Creator's help.

> *So I got to a point where I decided that would be it. I started saying to my wife, (good-bye). I started for asking for forgiveness. What else can I do? Because all it took was one stroke on the neck and that would be it. So I just laid here not moving and I started crying. For some reason I started crying and I was asking for forgiveness from my Creator. Also something came over me just like it came clear. I asked them for help for me and became fully awake and I started thinking about it. Then I came here so that program helped me at least somehow. So I asked the Lord to*

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15 The terms, "stretch" or "bit" refers to the length of the sentence to be served.

> *come into my life and help me out. And after that I wasn't worried.* (Inspector, p. 6)

At a later stage when he was close to his mandatory release, a newspaper article initiated another turning point for him. The Inspector read an article about a thirty-five year old reflecting on her life. He read it over and over looking for the hidden meaning that could have meaning for his life. The Inspector was also thirty-five years old at the time.

> *You see you come to a point in your life no matter at some age when you start to think about your whole life. I was thinking of that article and here I turn 35 in January. Maybe that's when you really start thinking because before that I never thought where I was going when I was in my teens. Maybe when I turn 35 I will change things. For me it seemed so much alcohol in my family. Where did it start ? That's what made me think what alcohol does to a person. I was always blaming alcohol on my problems. (Yet I) done (it) at the same time. This program makes you think a lot because the other day when I was in the program somebody was talking and they made me feel like I was the same. You get scary feelings. It's scary to go out drinking and start doing things. It is easy here because you know you can't drink.* (Inspector, p. 29)

As mentioned earlier, turning points are not necessarily static points in time but may simply be markers that chart the ongoing of our journey. The segments to follow charted the process of change of Kerchief Kid. This was how Kerchief Kid described his involvement with programs at a stage in his life when he was "going with the flow".

> *I was a teenager and from there I started moving around quite a bit then here and there. I got in trouble with the law quite a bit. And I tried once a program there at Poundmakers Lodge. That was in 1985, but that was still in my early years and I was only 23, 24 years old, and I wasn't into the program and they got kicked out just before I finished the program. I had about three, four days left so they kicked me out and so I kind of forgot all about the*

> *programs or stuff like that and kept on going on my own. You know I was drinking. I drank a lot.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 1)

Developing a commitment to changing himself and seriously participating in programs, took time and the knowledge gained through lived experience. Kerchief Kid was able to reflect on how he had other opportunities, but after a time he blew his chances, the "time was not right".

> *I had a lot of chances to take something to work but I've been stuck with this bottle for 21 years. (Kerchief Kid, p.7)*

In fact, the initial turning point may be highlighted by events that occur in the future. Kerchief Kid talked about four turning points in his life that enabled him to turn around. They all revolved around the fact that Kerchief Kid felt that substance abuse, resulting in numerous impaired driving charges has been a major factor in the number of times he has been incarcerated. The last impaired driving charge he received was when his car tire got stuck on the rail, and he didn't even know. Kerchief Kid decided he'd better do something before he died. This was his first major turning point. He was tired of being charged with impaired driving.

> *I almost got into an accident myself the last impaired I got. It was in a town on the highway going to Jasper, Alberta. That's where I got my last impaired. On the car the back tire got stuck on that rail -- one side of the rail and it stopped right in front of a train eh. It was about 25 metres from the train. I was just blacked right out. I don't remember anything. I guess the RCMP asked me, "Do you know what that is?" And I said, "No. It's just the light. I don't know. It was a train." And the other track -- that other train track that's the passenger train that goes to Jasper. That doesn't stop. That goes straight by 50 km an hour or whatever. I was lucky I wasn't on that rail. That's when I woke up so I just pleaded guilty to my charge and I said, "Hey. Before I die I think I better do something.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 9)

The second turning point was when he began to take programs in which he was really listening. He had been in other programs before, but the "time was not right".

He talks about these programs when he was not committed from a different point. of view. The first one was a program about impaired driving. The second program was FLIP.

> *I start off with myself. I figured you know it's time for me to do something to my life before it's too late. Now that I just turned 31 and when I went into that first program Alcoholic's Addiction Program eh, I just started the first week it was a little slow and then I started understanding everything. And I started talking and talking and writing notes. And that really helped. I got right into it right away, and then when I came to this FLIP program here now that was a bonus. That really helped. I got more -- I felt more stronger and stronger every week as we were going through steps you know. And I built with it inside me. I found myself how to deal with everything. The alcohol was there, the anger was there, the hurt was there. All those things we talked about and especially the happiness you know. I found the happiness in me I'd never had. You know I figured I was happy where I was sitting but I guess I can still find happiness when I get out of here. But I will be sitting with happiness alone and not the bottle. Because the bottle and me and the happiness that's what I found. And now I don't need that anymore. I don't need that bottle. I just prepared myself when I got into this program. I told my caseworker, "I don't think I want this program." I said, "But I will take it." I wasn't going to really get right into it. I almost asked my caseworker to get me out on the second week. I did even talk to her. I will go to Henwood or somewhere else. But when that second week come around, that's where I started getting right into it.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 11)

The third turning point he related was connected to a guest speaker who attended the FLIP program and shared her story of the tragic accident that left her with lasting speech defects and limited physical capabilities as the result of a drunk driver. He was very moved by her story. At that time, he openly expressed remorse and stated that he hadn't really known what it was like to be on the other side of the fence.

> *But this program (FLIP), I took you know it really shook me because of that lady we've seen there that had an accident*

> *from an impaired driver. That's when I let everything out. I talked a bit and I don't think I will ever want to go back to drinking and driving. . . Oh shit. It shook me up right away. An especially this lady I seen here. She had a career. She had something going but all of a sudden, bang!. . . She could hardly talk. And it really softened my heart. It's not good I guess to be -- I used to think it's fun drinking and driving, but I never came to the point of getting into an accident and I thank God for that.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 9)

Kerchief Kid saw ending his incarceration as a fourth turning point in leaving the institution and searching for happiness. Although he didn't even think about drinking when he was temporarily absent from SDC on day or weekend passes, being back in the community on a full time basis was scary to think about.

> *Now when I go back home I know I will be dealing with a lot of people there because most of my friends they do drink a lot eh. They do drink a lot. That's one thing I got to work on. I got to prepare myself to avoid. Like right now when I'm on day passes you know I don't care about it. I don't care and I don't want to drink. When I go on my weekend pass I don't even think about drinking. That's my first step already there but when my time comes up there will be nobody to watch me. That's where I got to get ready for that. That will be a tough one there because you know what I'm going to say hey. I'm scared right there. That's where I'm scared, but I'm glad that I'm still with my common-law. She will be there to help me.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 9, 10)

Turning Yourself Around: Reclaiming Native Identity

Turning yourself around was a process that may occur as a result of the ongoing process of finding an unexplored part of yourself, finding a sense of self-worth, then reformulating a Native identity. Healing your wounds as you go smooths the path for your moccasins. Coyote continued to grieve the losses he experienced as a child. At that stage, he was powerless. The struggle has been uphill. Reconnecting to "who he is" has also helped him to reclaim a feeling of Nativeness that he can use in the future.

> *From that hurt child to that man now I know who I am. I know who Coyote is and he's cool. He's all right. He's what he should have been a long time ago because I don't think he would have came into the system if he found out who he really was. Yes. Because nobody really wanted to show me who I was. I had lost it. Like when I first came into like four years old into the government under the government social program I had six braids down to my butt you know. They cut that off after a month and I was lost between them. Like they cut my hair off and my way of doing (culture) you know. From that day I lost everything because the assimilation started. You know God dam I hate some of those people for doing it but that was the direction I was given to take so I took it. A hurting direction but where I am now.* (Coyote, p. 33)

Journey to the Community

The collaborators have shared some of experiences of their turning points in the journey of self-discovery. However, for Native people, reflecting about our behaviors and attitudes on our own was not as meaningful or powerful as reflecting in the circle. Being surrounded by a community context (SDC) that is grounded in Native ways helped them to achieve a better sense of their Native identity, before they returned to society. Therefore, transferring to the Stan Daniels Center with its holistic approach, primarily Native residents and staff, and Native-oriented programs and support systems provided an opportunity for Native offenders to reexamine their past history, reclaim their Aboriginal identity and reformulate their goals.

Meo Matsuin: The Institutional Community

The Stan Daniels Center was established to "meet the needs of Native offender". The mandate of SDC was to enable Native residents to make the transition to the community easier by using the holistic philosophy of Native culture and spirituality. The process was supported and enhanced by staff, that are primarily Native, who are able to relate meaningfully to the residents. Thus, staff fulfill not only a security role, but function as supportive role models for the residents. One of the

collaborators, who is also an administrator, expressed the philosophy of SDC in the following way.

> *This whole Centre runs on that kind of philosophy. You know that holistic kind of living. Take care of all parts of your life is the message here. Don't -- you know get rid of the labels that the system has given you. Yes, they have labeled you as a psychopathic alcoholic, but you know all you are is a hurting unit because you have been raised in an incredibly dysfunctional family and community. And the reason that it is dysfunctional are these reasons. You are an Indian. There was oppression happening. There was genocide happening at one time in our lives. They are all those things that we have to understand how Indian people became so brutalized by the rest of the system. And once we start to understand what happened to our history and that it wasn't heathen and that it wasn't bad and that dirty as much as the dominant society wanted the Indians to believe that they were savages that's not the case, and this Centre is trying to renew that goodness in Indian people. Because I believe all people are inherently good and especially Native people. They are born with a good spirit. Well we are all born with good spirits -- white, black, yellow. It doesn't matter. What happens with this is how we are shaped and molded that makes us come out the way we do. So if we can go back to that original concept and work from there, bonus eh? So you have got to take care of your mental, emotional, spiritual and physical needs. And one of the guys here is a fine example. You know that's a real good thing about this Centre is that it looks at people as individuals.* (Brown Eyes, p. 5)

As a result of the focus on Native ways, the atmosphere at SDC was open and flexible compared to the more structured institutions that the incoming residents have transferred from. Relying on the code of the "two way system", which in prison lingo was known as "being solid"[16] was discouraged at SDC. Residents are encouraged to

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[16] "Being solid" refers to a way of perceiving the world. It means never indicating any sign of weakness fear or anger to others. It also means showing no emotion or feelings, no matter what the situation. It also means not complaining but instead remaining insensitive to your environment. It also may mean taking advantage of

"work on themselves" and play an active role in their case management plans. The philosophy of the Stan Daniels Center was grounded in the belief that, in order to facilitate change, a holistic approach integrating the spiritual, mental, physical and emotion needs of the residents must be used. Adapting to the more nurturing, flexible atmosphere of the Stan Daniels Center was a challenge to the new residents from other institutions. Although the staff engaged the new residents in a dialogue about the philosophy and expectations of the Stan Daniels Center, time to adapt was necessary. Coming from a more structured atmosphere and a different philosophical outlook, adjusting to the relative freedom of SDC and the FLIP program that focused on feelings and communication was understandably difficult for the residents. Coyote, the Inspector and Wolf shared their experiences about the transition period to SDC.

> *You are regulated so much (in other institutions) and you are given a rope (at SDC) -- a ten foot rope and you are given the God forsaken right to run and take that ten foot rope, tie a knot and run and make sure you stretch your neck about ten feet long and hang yourself. And I think that purpose of doing that is a good experience because you can only sometimes go eight feet, five feet, a foot, or maybe sometimes ten feet and a quarter. To learn to experience to taking a little bit of responsibility for what you are doing, your actions in the community, actions with yourself, actions within the system itself.* (Coyote, p. 9)

> *You have to sacrifice something, meaning family or friends to be able to try.* (Inspector, p. 31)

> *Well coming from the Max, (Edmonton Institution) I was very hard. Bad, bad attitude. . . And coming from there to this setting in order to be mellow it was a hard task to do. I would outright refuse programs. The transition is so sudden. So fast. Just not --.* (Wolf, p. 3).

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those who have not yet learned to "be solid". It reflects a "way of looking at the world".

Question 2 and 3:

The Role of Native Culture and Spirituality in the FLIP Program

The Stan Daniels Center, in general, and the Family Life Improvement Program, in particular, gives residents the opportunity to begin or rekindle the process of change. FLIP is a life skills program based on Native tradition and spirituality that recognizes the ability of each individual to make changes to their lifestyle in a mutually sharing, caring and respectful environment. The stories shared by the collaborators of their experiences in the FLIP program clarified the research questions relating to the interconnections between the FLIP program, and the role of Native culture and spirituality in the FLIP program.

The FLIP program helped the collaborators to continue the self-discovery process that may have begun elsewhere. Throughout the program, the processes of: self-discovery, reconnecting to their Native roots, embracing spirituality and making changes in one's life journey were enhanced.

The FLIP Program

The Journey of Transition

The process of participating in the FLIP program is described through the stories shared by the collaborators. Parallels between the collaborators who participated in FLIP and the administrators of the program are presented. The role of the Native facilitators who acted as spiritual guides and role models in the FLIP program will also be discussed.

The program itself began with a cultural component. The Elder(s) were the primary source of teachings and knowledge about Native spirituality and tradition. Experiencing traditional ceremonies and rituals helped the collaborators to reconnect with their cultural heritage. The traditional talking and healing circle provided them with the opportunity to share their past history, reclaim their Native identity and

continue the process of self discovery. As a result of their experiences in the FLIP program, the stories the collaborators shared indicated that they had begun to reframe their personal philosophy, Native identity and goals for the future. They also developed strategies for achieving a balance in the community. Finally, the collaborators reflected on the healing process they journeyed in the FLIP program and how they envisioned their reconnections to the community. In conclusion, the experiences of the collaborating in the research journey will be discussed.

Walking the Same Walk and Talking the Same Talk.

The collaborators who shared their stories in the research study were asked about their experiences in the FLIP program. However, a number of these collaborators were also administrators of the FLIP program. Nevertheless, the stories they shared about the program reflected stories that the other collaborators had shared. Such consistency between collaborators who have experienced the program firsthand and those who determine the guidelines and objectives of the FLIP program was unique. A few examples follow that illustrate the similarities between collaborators who are positioned on different sides of the fence. Each example consists of comments from inside and outside the FLIP program. In the following example, two of the collaborators, describe the rigidity of the institutions. They both perceive the "system" in the same way.

> *What we are trying to address is these guys when they come back out being incarcerated means that you make no decisions. Everything is basically done for you when you sleep, when you eat, when you get up, who your friends are, what privileges you have and you don't' have -- that sort of thing.* (Beaver, p. 4)

> *You are no longer a person: Coyote. You are a number: 123456. Please enter the system. Your room is number 12, top bunk. Clean it up. Make sure it's clean and that's it. When you call your number you shall run to the door.* (Coyote, p. 8)

Both the Inspector and Brown Eyes envision the FLIP program as a philosophy and practice that could be implemented on a much wider scale. They both agreed that the FLIP program could help Native communities to heal.

> *It would be good to set up a school where you can train people that have been through the system and through alcoholism. Even to the counselors. It would help a lot of people. It would help a lot of people on the reserves with their drinking.* (Inspector, p. 27)

> *I wish that more places would have our philosophy and I'm not just talking about places that are dealing with clients. I'm talking about work places. I'm talking about schools and I'm talking about communities. . . We can see and be part of change can you imagine how healthy the community, the world would be if everybody opened up and was truly their own?* (Brown Eyes, p. 12)

Both of these collaborators recognized the flexibility and adaptability of Native culture. They both discussed how the messages and strengths of each Elder was different.

> *The Elder is quite a presence in the group. . . They are always available to talk to the guys. We have a variety of Elders, mostly those we are familiar with, but a lot of times we use different Elders because the messages are different and each Elder has something to offer.* (Beaver, p. 5)

> *The Elder is the spiritual foundation. . . If they had more resource people as the Elders coming in to do teachings--different teachings other than just the one teaching because there is a variety of teachings out there. And I rebelled against one of the Elder's teachings because I thought this one was right and nobody told me they are all the same, or I didn't get that belief into my head that all these teachings were the same. But they have different ways of conducting the ceremonies and different ways of doing things.* (Wolf, p. 7)

Another shared perspective on the FLIP program was expressed in very similar ways by Brown Eyes and Wolf. Both agreed that implementing a follow up to the FLIP program was necessary.

> *So we have to come up with innovative ways of how to do follow-up. I know that we don't follow up enough. I think because the group bonds so much and spends so much time together, intense time together, eight weeks -- that when it's over it's like ah!!!, now what? . . . You can give them all the information you want but if you don't allow them an opportunity or a venue to practice what they have learned -- a place to practice communication they are going to start regressing. So yes it's very important. So follow-up is very important. It has got to happen.* (Brown Eyes, p. 8, 9)

> *And they don't have an aftercare which they should have. It is because all of a sudden you get thrown into a safe haven and you trust. Then you get out and you are wanting to practice these skills that have been taught to you. Then you leave yourself open and you get pain delivered for what you are trying to practice. . . They have a follow-up program but they should have a little follow-up program for airing -- even two or three days. And just in between the period time -- maybe a two month period or something. A follow-up. Two days. Take the two day program or something just to reconnect. Just to say, "Okay, yes. I'm not forgot." You know even if it's to get everybody together even to go have a Sweat and go sit out there for the day or a couple of days and just relax and just say, "Okay this is where I'm at. Like a little bit confused and this and this and this.* (Wolf, p. 14)

Sharing in the process of growth, change and healing was a profound and humbling experience for all the collaborators. Recognizing the change in others helped the collaborators to acknowledge the changes in their own journeys. The collaborator close to the program witnessed the changes, the collaborator inside the program experienced them: it's all part of the same process.

> *Actually it's an honor to witness men's growth, change, acceptance. Like oh I can think of people's faces. I guess that's what touches me most is to see the change in their*

> *face. You know when somebody is healing and somebody when they are right in the middle of some really crisis times in the program. They look like hell eh. And it's the same in here. When they start to change in FLIP they start to change everywhere in the centre.* (Brown Eyes, p. 10)

> *Like I learned a lot of things from classmates (collaborators) because I could actually feel what they went through because I could relate to that.* (Superman, PWII, p. 12)

> *Actually I like most of the people. I saw a lot of changes in all of them. . . All the boys and brothers. I call them brothers because they shared a lot of things that I wouldn't share to nobody. Like there is a lot of things that they know about me now that nobody knows.* (Coyote, p. 36)

In this example, both Superman and Brown Eyes described Native identity; how it was frequently unacknowledged and unexplored but eventually became a source of pride. Often, we do not know that we are Indian people. Learning to be proud of our Native identity was a life changing process.

> *Since living on the street I didn't even have a name. You know there is things I could tell you in my past when I was at the foster homes what they would do but the name part wasn't Superman. It was Saunders. It was Davids. It was other names but not my real name. I didn't even know I was an Indian. I learned who Superman was and Superman is. Now I learned he is an Indian and he is proud of it.* (Superman, p. 11, 23)

> *What is it to be an Indian? Some of these guys don't know. Some of these guys are embarrassed to be an Indian. They have been taught that they are French. They have been taught that they are white. They have been taught that they are Italian. You know they have never really looked at being proud of being an Indian person and the culture and the traditional life style is something to be very proud of.* (Brown Eyes, p. 3)

Who You Are

During the interviews, the collaborators shared the nature of their experiences. Most of the collaborators spoke in general terms about the impact that the FLIP program had on their everyday lives and the process of self-discovery. Nevertheless, their in depth comments covered almost every aspect of the seven week FLIP program. One of the comments from a collaborator reflected a generalized view of the respondents about the FLIP program, I couldn't have expressed it better myself.

> *And it's kind of funny because I never would have talked like this to anybody at this point in time because I didn't understand myself. The whole idea of this FLIP program is I think that it shouldn't be called Family Life Improvement Program. I think it's more of WHO YOU ARE program.* (Coyote, p. 7)

Facilitating the Who You Are FLIP Program

In Native culture and tradition, one of the greatest teachers is experience itself. Therefore, it follows that the facilitators, who are the spiritual guides for the FLIP program, have faced and conquered many challenges in their own life journeys'. The trusting, respectful, caring atmosphere engendered by the facilitators in the FLIP program enabled the participants to explore their past history, reexamine their Native identity and re-chart their life journeys.

> *And yes, Grey Eyes, I think that's one of the good things is because they have Bear and they have Grey Eyes and I kind of like the two because Bear has been there and gotten out the same as Grey Eyes there had gotten out and they can associate and be comfortable with whoever they want.* (Wolf, p. 15)

> *(The facilitator) is really a good person. When I look at her she's really doing good. She says, "Do good. Stay out of jail." Hopefully everything works.* (Tundra, PWII, p. 23)

The collaborators are viewed by the facilitators as fellow explorers along the path of self-discovery. Each individual in the FLIP program is on the same level. The

open minded accepting attitudes of the facilitators combined with their sensitivity and respect helped the collaborators to feel comfortable about sharing their personal stories. Acknowledging that the stories and experience of each participant qualitatively differs was one of the strengths of the facilitators in FLIP. Therefore, the facilitators encouraged the collaborators to "take what you need" from the FLIP program.

Developing innovative ways to meet the needs of the collaborators was another strength of the facilitators in FLIP. Rather than denying or dismissing the wounds that remain unexamined, the collaborators were encouraged to acknowledge their hurts, pains and grief. The facilitators wanted participants to communicate their feelings about the healing process throughout the journey of the FLIP program. Then the healing process can begin.

Sharing and acknowledging our past history began the process of healing. The facilitators helped the collaborators to share their past and begin to heal. The familiarity of the facilitators with the Native way enabled them to integrate cultural teachings that corresponded to the experiences shared by the collaborators. Consequently, the struggles experienced by the collaborators are re-interpreted by the facilitators with a Native orientation that is meaningful to the participants. Thus, the collaborators were able to reframe their own experiences. For example, instead of perceiving the twists and turns along life's journey as a setback, they were viewed as a learning experience.

According to one of the facilitators, our feelings are a gift to us from the Creator. Our feelings originate from the heart but it is often the head that makes the decision about what we do with our feelings. The FLIP program focused on reconnecting the head and the heart so that the actions dictated by our head reflect what is in our hearts. Reconnecting our heads and hearts helped the collaborators to know "*who you are*."

Developing an understanding of our Native identity and spirituality is a primary focus of FLIP exemplified by the spiritual pathway chosen by the facilitators. The

facilitators initiate the process of sharing within the talking and healing circle by sharing their own stories. *Walking their talk* was the most powerful means of sharing their spiritual journey with the other participants in FLIP. For many of the collaborators in FLIP, the facilitators provided the spark that enabled the collaborators to rekindle their journeys of self discovery.

Planting the Seeds: Spirituality

The framework of Native spirituality and tradition in the FLIP program enables the participants to reconnect with a Native frame of reference. The reconnection to their roots helped to frame the journey of self discovery using the foothold of their cultural regeneration. Their experiences in FLIP enhanced their positive feelings towards their identity as Native people. For some, a renewal; for others, a new awakening.

Who Are You: Culturally?

One of the strengths of the FLIP program was its emphasis on Native tradition and spirituality. The FLIP program began with a four-day fast supervised by the resident Elder, followed by a week of cultural dialogue with a number of Elders, revolving around the Aboriginal world view; including ceremonies, rituals, traditions and Aboriginal ways of knowing. On the basis of the in depth, meaningful stories shared by the respondents, the cultural component obviously exerted a powerful influence on their process of self discovery. Some of the dialogue shared by Wolf and Superman follow.

> *Today I got a good life. A good head on my shoulders. I know what direction to take. I know I have been put on this earth you know to help people because I was taught for a reason. And I'm not going to change my life. If they said well if you had a chance to go back and do four years out would you not? I would tell them no. Because I've learned many good things. I learned who Superman was and Superman is. Now I learned he is an Indian and he is proud of it. He loves himself. He can look in the mirror today and he can say he's not a bad looking guy you know. To respect myself and keep myself clean. The programs you know we*

always talk about what can we do for the inmate, for an Aboriginal person and they always say one word. Culture. Because with the true culture inside yourself and the sweet grass when you Smudge and the Feather in your hand and the Pipe and the Sweat Lodge and the Sun Dances and the Pow Wows, the Round Dances, the Feasts. You know it makes the heart really happy and when I share with the people today I always remind them you are an Indian person. Be proud of it and respect your culture because the culture does not teach you how to drink. It doesn't teach you how to live off women. It doesn't teach you how to do drugs. It doesn't teach you to live on the streets. It teaches you love. It teaches you respect yourself and each individual that you come to is your brother, your sister. It's part of you. And today when I finish the final day -- the graduation -- I felt about me. I felt good about every person in that room that completed the course -- the (FLIP) program. All the ones that didn't I still respect them because we all have problems. You know we always kick ourselves in the ass but as long as they do that and take that step forward without taking two steps backwards they will make it. I'm not going to say I'm going to be the goody, goody you know. To be a priest or to be that special guy. I have my mistakes but at least I know what to do now. I know my Elders. I know the programs that I can take. The AA programs, and thousands of people out there that are walking the same walk I am. (Superman, p. 24)

The spiritual foundation of an Indian person -- that's what they need to gear in on. It's because that's what everybody gear in on because if they have no spiritual foundation then you build that house and it just falls. (Wolf, p. 13)

And the culture doesn't give you alcohol. It gives you respect. It gives you love. Understanding. And if you walk together in unity as one and that's what I believe in today. (Superman, p. 25)

One of the things that is really needed for the younger generation is for the people, the older men and women and even the young ones that are in jail incarcerated to go and tell their stories. It is because the Elders once told me when I was doing time in the Max. They said, "There is no

> *teachers out there about what life is about." They said, "You are the teachers because you have lived through that life. You are inside this institution. You are experiencing this life. There is many young ones out there that want to go and do crime. They haven't experienced what you have experienced. You are the teacher. You are the ones to do the teaching." And so you go to the school and you tell them of your experiences it might not click in right away but it will be planting the seeds, yes.* (Wolf, p. 5)

Superman succinctly summarized how Native culture works to enhance the heart and head of those who choose a spiritual journey as their pathway.

> *If we had the real meaning of the culture inside us today we wouldn't be here because our culture doesn't have alcohol. It doesn't have drugs. And that's what it's all about. Family living through the program. We are living the culture. We are walking it. We are walking with our family. When you say all my relations it means all of us together. All Aboriginal people and we improve it every day because we have the faith of what is ahead of us. But today we keep on struggling which is good. I know a lot of people will be there for me and be there for you. You just have to respect it and accept it. We have to accept what's inside our hearts. Every morning there is one saying and I say to the Creator and the Grandfather just to help me stay sober and walk a good way today. Those Grandfathers are something that I always tell the young people that when they pray they have to walk that prayer because the Grandfathers are there to guide you and give you knowledge of what you went through the day. But those Grandfather, there is a bottle of beer in front of me. Those Grandfathers won't put it up to my mouth you know. They will show me what's inside my heart and make those feelings say, hey you're the one that's going to take that drink if you want it. It's not the Grandfathers. When I pray I say, help me Grandfathers to stay sober. I'm really asking myself to help me so in order to stop I don't have to take that alcohol. I don't have to put that bottle to my lips because I believe my prayer and I ask for help. It's me that has to help me too. I have to do 99% of that prayer.* (Superman, PWII, p. 14)

Cultural Threads

The Elder

The Elder played a major role in sharing Native tradition and culture with the participants in FLIP. He acted as a confidante, spiritual guide and source of knowledge. Throughout the stories of the collaborators, the Elder was referred to as the teacher of the culture. He shared some of the lived experience of the participants but was later chosen to lead a spiritual path. The Elder also acted as a positive role model through example by his humble approach. He was available when the participants felt that "the time is right" to approach him.

The Elder was responsible for the Pipe ceremonies and Prayer Sweat Lodge. He also participated in the traditional circle. The Elder could be asked for help and guidance by offering tobacco; or offering tobacco, and a gift of print(s), (two meters of yellow, red, green or blue fabric) depending on what the Elder suggested, or another appropriate gift instead of the print, such as a blanket. Although a number of different Elders participate as spiritual guides during the cultural week of FLIP as teachings vary slightly from region to region, tribe to tribe, and Elder to Elder, usually the one Elder was available throughout the program.

> *The Elder is the spiritual foundation. I was not balanced well enough. If they had more resource people as the Elders coming in to do teachings-- different teachings other than just the one teaching because there is a variety of teachings out there. . .Nobody told me they are all the same, or I didn't get that belief into my head that all these teachings were the same.* (Wolf, p. 7)

> *...but then my Elders came in and I started learning from it and that's where the real healing started. After talking to them.* (Superman, p. 18)

The Elder has seen many troubled residents pass through the Stan Daniels Center. In his experience, the residents that truly embrace spirituality as a life long commitment to the "Native way" make an easier transition to the community. He recognized that the pathway was sometimes rocky and falling down was to be expected and understood. But in the journey of life, spirituality gave you the help of the Creator and the inner strength to pick yourself up and carry on, having overcome another obstacle in your path. One of the collaborator's stories illustrated the process well.

> *I sort of started going back to my old ways a bit. I forgot my AA meetings. I was hanging around with people that were drinking and I said, "Well I'm strong enough to be able to handle it." I would go to bars and go play at jamborees and that and never got into contact with my Elders. . . I snagged a woman for the night. So I woke up the next morning and her beside me and here a couple of cases of beer and a bottle of vodka and I said, "Oh gee. What did I do?" So I pushed her and I said, "Wake up and go get some more booze." So I started shoving things down again. I got weak. . . But I phoned an Elder in a reserve close to where I was and he come to pick me up and I stayed out there for a while and off and on I would fall off and I would relapse. . . I took off for six and a half months last year. I got picked up and I told the RCMP., "You know I'm glad it's finally over. Thank you for picking me up." And that's when the healing started again. I went back to the institution and I explained to the Elders. They said, "You had to learn. There is a reason why you did that. You never caused that much trouble. A lot of people from all over were praying for you because they knew something was wrong. You had to have that final alcohol. Now," she said, "Learn from this." So I did. I learned from it. . . The tools we learned are there. But some of us seem to forget our support. We can use the tools and we can talk tools you know. We can bury them though and that's what a lot of us do. . . I believe that Native people are very special people and also the white people. White people have their own ways and we have ours and it's a special gift to us. Like our culture. I hear so many Elders talk about the good things and I want those good things. You know and I can have them if I only walk towards them.*
> (Superman, p. 19, 20, 21)

Ceremonies and Rituals

As mentioned earlier, the Elder was responsible for the ceremonies and rituals practiced throughout the FLIP program. If it was feasible, the FLIP program began with a fast. Those who have not fasted before are encouraged to fast for two days and two nights, otherwise the fast lasts four days and four nights. The participants are guided and supported by the Elder as well as others, who prepared a traditional feast before and after the period of fasting.

Pipe ceremonies and sweat lodges are also the responsibility of the Elder. The Elder could be asked for help and guidance by the offering of tobacco and/or print or another appropriate gift. Participants of the FLIP program had the opportunity to participate in these ceremonies on a weekly basis. The sweat lodges were usually held on Friday morning. The sweat lodges provided the participants an opportunity to directly connect with the Creator. The sweat lodge ceremony initiated a special connectedness between those who shared the tranquillity of the sweat lodge setting.

> *The programs you know we always talk about what can we do for the inmate, for an Aboriginal person and they always say one word. Culture. Because with the true culture inside yourself and the sweet grass when you Smudge and the Feather in your hand and the Pipe and the Sweat Lodge and the Sun Dances and the Pow Wows, the Round Dances, the Feasts.* (Superman, p. 24)

Although the sweat lodge ceremony itself provided an opportunity to reconnect spiritually, the feast following the ceremony also gave everyone the opportunity to share informally in the open environment of Mother Earth. In essence, the sweat lodge ceremonies provided another outlet for expressing, communicating and healing feelings aroused by the storytelling of the talking and healing circle.

The Traditional Healing and Talking Circle

The traditional talking and healing circle was another cultural aspect of the FLIP program which enhanced the possibilities of making changes and growing for the participants. In Native traditional culture, medicines, primarily consisting of herbs and roots, were used. Medicines were used to strengthen the links between the Creator and ourselves. Therefore, smudging was practiced in FLIP before the daily sessions commenced and was often used throughout the day as well. Using medicines was helpful especially if the subject matter was painful and feelings were raw and vulnerable. In FLIP, smudging enhanced the comfort of the participants as they shared previous memories or events.

Everyday, the circle began with a reconnection, in which the feather or talking stick was used as a symbol of sharing and a reminder to be respectful when others are sharing. The talking stick or feather was passed from one to another in a clockwise direction. Collaborators shared where they were coming from so that they were more able to leave their everyday concerns aside and focus on sharing in the circle. It was a humbling experience to share the confidence of others. Without the development of mutual trust and caring, the sharing and knowing of the other participants would not be as meaningful. The collaborators perceived the circle as a "Native way" of sharing and communicating with one another, healing occurred in the process of doing so.

> *There is a reason why we are sitting around a circle. This is what the Elders teach. They teach me that. We have all this knowledge because we were educated in the institutions. We were educated on the streets. We were educated on bad relationships. We have to learn from that. We have to bring it out of ourselves and share in the groups to be able to understand of where we are sitting today. Like I learned a lot of things from classmates (in FLIP) because I*

could actually feel what they went through because I could relate to that. It's part of me. You have some programs that you just sit there and there's nothing there. Here when the smudge is going on, the people in here are healing by voicing their pain. That's a way of communicating you know. I actually have a lot of respect for that. (Superman, PWII, p. 12)

Mutual Trust and Sharing

The mutual trust and sharing in the FLIP program was a moving insightful experience. Although concerns were sometimes expressed by the collaborators about confidentiality, in my experience, the cycle of trust and mutual respect was not broken. This experience was not unique to this particular FLIP program, my previous experience within the other programs that I participated was very similar. For some of us, just knowing that the trust, respect and humor could gradually develop in a positive sense reinforced who we were and our value as people. It provided a potential steppingstone to relationships outside of the program as well.

Not (scary) at all because I was willing to work on myself. I found -- because I chose to go to that program and I chose to express myself and put trust into the group and so I wasn't scared because I was confident in myself. There was no need for me to hide anything. (Wolf, p. 6)

Actually I like most of the people. I saw a lot of changes in all of them. Actually mostly him. He was such a negative person when he came to the program and now he giggles and laughs and jokes which is good. The girls they were a lot of help to me to talk about everything. Sexuality even and stuff like that. All the boys and brothers. I call them brothers because they shared a lot of things that I wouldn't share to nobody. Like there is a lot of things that they know about me now that nobody knows. Nobody will ever know because they will help me keep it away from themselves. I hope they do. (Coyote, p. 36)

But going back to the question of FLIP, that was the very, very first time that I've ever cried in the system to

somebody or to a crowd of 12, 13 people. I've never cried to anybody else. Never. (Coyote, p. 5)

But in order to change your life from all the systems that you've been through all the time in the institutions and times you were abused and hurt and beat and you know spit at or whatever, you have to release that. It's the only way you are going to make it. If you hold things back it only pulls you down because of the pain and the anger that you have for it. So I think that the healing starts wherever you are. (Superman, p. 22)

Sharing With Others

Sharing involved the dual processes of speaking and listening and both involved a commitment. Sharing one's own story of self-discovery often sparked similar remembrances in others. Then too, the healing spread like a blanket from one person to the others. Thus, disclosing provided both the speaker and listener another opportunity to work on themselves. Kerchief Kid, and the Inspector were reminded of their own childhood experiences as other participants spoke. Although it was hurtful, it was also an invaluable way to validate your own experience.

Anyways I found this program there really a some places you can you know really hurts to listen to other people what they are talking about, especially growing up in early days when brought up all the abuses and foster home abuses. Because that foster home is a you know really to tell you the truth I've been in a foster home myself and it's not too good eh. There was about three of us -- a couple of my brothers and one sister -- four of us were in the same house for about a month and then from there they separated us and I hadn't seen my brothers and sister until I was about four or five years later. And it's really tough. And you don't get to see your parents because when you are in a foster home you know that your parents are that's their problem because they have been drinking and not taking care of the kids. And then the next thing when I got out of that foster home -- actually I ran away from it. I ran away and just went home. I went and got into trouble again. That's when they locked me up. They started locking me up then. Yes, that kind of

> *stuff you know foster homes -- back then it was a little hard. They are always hard. You will never find a foster parent that will be good to you all the time.* (Kerchief Kid, p. 8)

> *So by being in that program I dealt with a lot of things. I say it helped a lot of things because when somebody would be relating a story or telling a story I would remember the hurts and pains that I suffered when I was a kid as I grew up.* (Inspector, p. 8)

A couple of collaborators also mentioned that the resource people who shared their stories and experience in the program acted as positive role models. The experience of sharing their stories with a Native community group outside the institution was both meaningful and helpful to the collaborators.

> *It shook me up right away. An especially this lady I seen here. She had a career. She had something going but all of a sudden, bang!. . .She could hardly talk. And it really softened my heart. It's not good I guess to be -- I used to think it's fun drinking and driving, but* (Kerchief Kid, p. 9)

> *The resource people was excellent because they brought in as many people as they could in there and wouldn't interfere with the program. And they were very inspirational to the people as long as they had the open mind.* (Wolf, p. 4)

> *I went to YTC the other day last week and we talked to social workers. I felt okay with a few of them. There was at least 15 of them but there is only certain ones that listened. The ones that really understood where we came from. Maybe they had a bad lifestyle and they understood where we came from. We shared our feelings, our past and some were ignorant because they were probably brought up in the white man's way where the books tell the truth. They have a lot of things that they say in the books and they believe in that way because they actually didn't feel what we went through. It doesn't tell you how we feel in a book and I'm totally against that. If I want to learn. If I want to educate myself I have to talk to other people and hear their story and their life because I can relate to that. They themselves are the books that I learned from. I can't learn*

that from a book and I can't learn what sexual abuse is because all they do is give you a label like saying well, he's been abused. Well how does that book tell me how he was my life, anger, the fear, the pain and all those resentments I carried for many years because those books tell you that. It doesn't. Groups like this, the FLIP program it teaches me how to recognize you know my resentments and how to deal with them if I allow it. (Superman, PWII, p. 9)

Risk Taking

Sharing and communicating stories that revealed feelings, emotions, beliefs and actions was not without risk. The development of mutual trust and respect in the group enabled the collaborators to test their courage and share in spite of the risks. Sometimes some of the participants in the group were less committed and more negative than others. There is a Native saying often quoted, "What goes around, comes around". If you share, you heal. Healing and working on yourself has risks but the benefits of furthering the process of self-discovery are incalculable. The collaborators were able to build using their own experience and that of the other collaborators.

And trying to share. I talked to some of the boys about my past pains and hurts because after a while in the program I started feeling comfortable with so many people. I wasn't scared of sharing. After a few weeks or so I felt comfortable just to say anything I wanted to and share anything because I trusted the group. Before I didn't trust anybody. They didn't laugh at me or make fun of me or told stories about me. So I had to take their listening and trusting me just in some way with my real feelings. There was a lot of trust. The program itself has really helped me. I've seen some of the people change quite a bit. From the first day I met them they were withdrawn and quiet and scared to talk. I guess I was that way too. We didn't know each other. They were total strangers and how can I trust a stranger when I am dealing with what I've done and what's happened to me when I was a kid. For me after a while I felt comfortable about just telling anybody anything.

Programs like this they do help a person but they have to want it. (Inspector, p. 8)

I can be objective about that one when the negativity is around because I don't take it on a personal level. It is their problem but if it does concern (me) then I have to be careful with it because I do get drawn into it. And if I do that I don't like the man that's been drawn into that negativity. I like to observe and watch the behaviors of a person so I can learn. That was a good group to learn from. (Wolf, p. 6)

Maintaining Sharing, Caring and Communicating

Sharing and communicating was risky business. Developing trust was an important aspect of the sharing process. Therefore, a number of the collaborators suggested that it is very important that the group in the FLIP program be consistent. The inspector talked about another program where new participants begin each week of the four week program. Another respondent remarked how important regular attendance was. Coyote admitted how difficult it was to acknowledge his own denial.

Yes. You have one week and you have the same group and the next week there are two or three different people. You can't share with somebody strange. You go two weeks before and all of a sudden there is three or four new clients sitting there and then you have to start off on the beginning. That trust part is there again. How will I trust this person again? He's a stranger. (Inspector, p. 12)

Then this program has also taught me that being honest with myself and I think being a friend to myself to me was the most important part. Because now I can be a friend to anybody and be honest with them without being a lie as to being in front of you and talking to you and saying this is this and this is that and it doesn't have to be as you say I want to be this but then you are something else. It doesn't have to be like that anymore because I went through a lot of stages as I was going through this program. I went through the stage as you can say denial. Not through the alcohol part but the denial of who I really was and not being that person, being the Native helping himself and being raised in a white society. (Coyote, p. 2)

FLIP and Perceived Needs for Change

The collaborators shared both their lived experience and their experiences throughout the FLIP program. Entering, participating and completing the FLIP program has been qualitatively different for each of the collaborators although there were similar themes in their stories. Throughout the interviewing process, the collaborators have suggested how the FLIP program could be more effective in enhancing the process of self-discovery, reconnecting to their Native roots and using Native spirituality in making a more successful transition to the community.

More Time

A number of collaborators commented that they felt that the seven weeks of the FLIP program was not long enough. They felt that the program was instrumental in enabling them to change themselves. The phrase that comes to mind that describes the process of participating in FLIP was "reconnecting the head and the heart". As others have mentioned earlier, in other institutions and other programs, one of the survival techniques was "not to feel". FLIP unlocked the door on feelings. It provided the opportunity for sharing and communicating feelings in the safe, trusting, respectful traditional circle. However, the respondents felt that certain topics covered in the program could be dealt with in more depth. Daddy Cool wanted more time to discover more about himself. Given more time, Kerchief Kid would have shared more about his past experiences. The courage to share takes time to develop. The Inspector would have liked to spend more time discussing the inner child. Even the one collaborator, Wolf, who suggested that the program was an appropriate length, ended up taking the FLIP program a second time. The way the collaborators spoke, the FLIP program helped the collaborators to feel they had more choices in their lives, now.

> *But the FLIP program, if a person really is serious about changing himself it really works. It's a good program. It's a*

very good program. I like it. I like everything about FLIP. What I believe for seven weeks for me it was too short. Seven weeks was too short for me. I just start to get to know everything about myself, about -- I wish there would be a little bit more you know like how to know about a little bit more to know about myself. Even -- I know a lot about myself now but it's always nice to know more about yourself and who you are and that's what that program all about is to know who you are and who are you. Because I know who I am now. I know I am a good person. I know a very, very decent man, a good hearted. I used to have an anger problem like I used to get angry. I don't have that anymore. I want to be happy now. I want to do things for myself. (Daddy Cool, p. 7)

And you know I didn't really have much time to talk about most of what I was going to talk about. So I kind of just taking shortcuts. Anyways I did heal myself quite a bit here and there. But I worked most of the time that we were in the program, I worked with my anger. I worked on that and how to deal with it and especially I was getting letters from my common-law that she wanted to give up on me and everything. (Kerchief Kid p. 2, 3)

Anybody that wants to take the FLIP program it is really a good program. I never thought a program would help make a person open up that much and share our feelings. Things like that inner child part I was taking for two weeks straight really make a person think. Because we only took one. I felt that I didn't have any time to really share about my childhood . I feel that I started opening that door to my inner child and running out of time and closing that door and shutting off your feelings. That's how I feel. You should have at least three weeks. It drains you again. (Inspector, p. 18)

The program itself is an excellent program I feel. For the people they seem to get in touch with themselves. I feel it's the appropriate times -- seven weeks is good. (Wolf, p. 4)

Implementing A Follow Up to FLIP

Participating and collaborating in the FLIP program was very intensive and draining. However, often opportunities to practice new found skills and philosophy are difficult to find. Reconnecting to those you have shared with in your personal journey of self discovery may provide a renewed sense of self awareness and determination to continue a spiritual path.

> *And they don't have an aftercare which they should have. It is because all of a sudden you get thrown into a safe haven and you trust. Then you get out and you are wanting to practice these skills that have been taught to you. Then you leave yourself open and you get pain delivered for what you are trying to practice. . . They have a follow-up program but they should have a little follow-up program for airing -- even two or three days. And just in between the period time -- maybe a two month period or something. A follow-up. Two days. Take the two day program or something just to reconnect. Just to say, "Okay, yes. I'm not forgot." You know even if it's to get everybody together even to go have a Sweat and go sit out there for the day or a couple of days and just relax and just say, "Okay this is where I'm at. Like a little bit confused and this and this and this."* (Wolf, p. 14)

Time Being Right

Native culture was always attuned to the different times and seasons of the cosmos including all of its inhabitants. The Native world view recognized that events or changes occur when the time is right and all elements interconnect with one another. For instance, stumbling or falling on the pathway does not mean failure but was an acknowledgment that the footfalls of your moccasins must change direction somewhere along the pathway. Reconnecting to the culture has changed the life journey of the collaborators.

> *(Before) I took the programs in jail just to get out to help me out with an early release or a change of scenery. . . I was trying to quit but . . . I was there for the wrong reasons. I*

was looking for some girl to fall in love with me or something. I was never happy in my other relationships. I wasn't there for myself. I was there for the courts and Family and Social Services. (In the Remand Center), something came over me just like it came clear, I was asking for forgiveness from my Creator. I asked to (go to) Poundmaker Lodge, I wasn't doing it for anybody. I was doing it for myself. . . (Then) I decided to take the FLIP program . . . After a few weeks or so I felt comfortable just to say anything I wanted to and share anything because I trusted the group. . . Now I know I have choices. I have learned to deal with my problems instead of just keeping them inside. (Inspector, p. 4, 6, 7, 8)

It taught me how to think positive even though I'm not the perfect man around the world I'm thinking positive for me and if I fail that's my problem. It's not yours. I don't call myself a failure. It's a mistake. I'm just not ready for that day. But today I'm ready. (Superman, PWII, p. 14)

I found -- because I chose to go to that program and I chose to express myself and put trust into the group and so I wasn't scared because I was confident in myself. (Wolf, p. 6)

.Personal Choices

Although the residents are incarcerated, feeling that they are able to make the final decision as to whether or not they attend the program or take advantage of what the FLIP program had to offer, helped the collaborators to develop a sense of responsibility and to practice their decision making skills. It also provided an opportunity for them to reflect on the tools they need to enhance their own self-discovery process.

From what I viewed when I first come here there was things kind of forced upon you -- spiritual things. The spiritual aspect of things here but the FLIP program they were just starting out and so you have to go to a Sweat or you have to do this, have to, have to. The decision was not being made by you. It was being made by them. That was not good. I

> *didn't sit good with that. I just outright refused to be a part of that because if a man wishes to be in a Sweat Lodge then he will go, but to be forced then it's not appropriate. But then this thing has gradually time I guess because they learn from their mistakes. They finally just said, "Okay, you can go to the Sweat site area and just sit around if you want but just come to the Sweat because it's part of the program.* (Wolf, p. 3)

More Organization

Maintaining consistency and organization enabled the residents to feel more comfortable in the FLIP program. Sharing the process of self-discovery, reconnecting to your roots and spirituality was enhanced when the program felt organized to the participants. Sharing with the same group of participants attending regularly enhances the degree of comfort and trust in the group.

> *So I went through the FLIP program and I took that. The program was good but yet there it was not organized. There were certain times that both facilitators couldn't be there and the in and out people and some of them coming three or four days and saying, "No. I will be here tomorrow." And the morning prayer and the morning smudge is good. It helps build a foundation for the people. . . And I enjoyed the program but yet I felt uncomfortable with certain areas that they touched on. The facilitators, yes they are good but they have to get a little organized I think other than that.* (Wolf, p. 3, 4)

> *So this program here (FLIP) is the same people that you finish with as you started with. You feel comfortable because the same people share and talk. I've been afraid of what one person is going to think of me or to judge. . . (But now) For me after a while I felt comfortable about just telling anybody anything.* (Inspector, p. 8, 12)

More Spiritual Content

One of the collaborators felt strongly that reconnecting to spirituality needs to be a step by step process. He recognized that for some residents, the spiritual journey

around which the FLIP program was focused, was a new experience. Therefore, reconnecting gradually allowed participants the time and opportunity for reflecting and integrating the Native way into their lifestyle in a way that was meaningful for them.

> *Some of these simple things are needed to be taught to the people. FLIP is good because it taught the respect to a person and the respect that is needed at the Sweat Lodge but there are other areas that need to be addressed. . . Pipe ceremony -- I've been doing a Pipe ceremony -- been involved in Pipe ceremonies for about three to four years and I've been told that this Pipe carries your prayers to the Creator but I don't know anything else more than that.* (Wolf, p. 7, 8)

> *The areas that they touched on spiritually was good. It was appropriate. Everything that they had done was good. But there is still a few things I feel that they have to hone up on in order for a person to get the full potential of the program. The program itself is an excellent program I feel. For the people they seem to get in touch with themselves. I feel it's the appropriate times -- seven weeks is good. Seven times you go to a program. It is three weeks and it's all condensed and brief and concise here. And you can just do it and the information isn't informational course program. That there was good.* (Wolf, p.8)

Who Are You After FLIP?

Personal Philosophy

An underlying emphasis of the FLIP program is developing tools and strategies that fit with who you are. Collaborators are encouraged to "take what you need" from the program to achieve your own personal balance. The following quotes are verbal expressions of the personal philosophy of some of the respondents.

> *That's why I use my culture because it is good. They talk of the beautiful things before you. You know when you smell that scent of the sweet grass it's a beautiful smell. You know I always like the sage. You go into the Sweat and you can feel the Eagles sort of come around and touch you. You know you've been touched. The Grandfathers are there for you and when you pray you pray with your heart, not your*

mind, but your heart. And you walk that prayer. You have to walk that prayer. You have got to walk your talk. How many times I've talked and talked. Well today I walk it. You know I'm not that perfect and I never will be. I will always remember where I come from but I'm proud of who I am today. You know the Elder said, "If you are Superman, then prove it to yourself. Don't prove it to me. Prove it to yourself. Be proud of being Indian. Be proud that you are alive. (Superman, p. 25)

I'm going to do it for myself. Nobody else. Sure there is a lot of people out there that care about me. They don't like to see me in jail and this and that. Deep down there is a lot of those friends they don't give a shit about you. . . This is where I have to learn to be able to take control of my life and not worry about the other person. . . I've always thought of other people's feelings but I never thought about my own feelings about how I felt. I was always trying to please other people and I still do that today. But I know that by doing that I help people just by being a friend. Someone that I know I can show care and love. This FLIP program it's a good program if you want it. And it's up to you if you want it or not. It's like any other program -- alcohol, drug programs. If you want to quit then you will take it in. I know that I have a lot of struggle and I'm going to have a lot of struggles out there. But I've always told my wife that no matter what happens today I will be sober. I've always had the problem of thinking about tomorrow, next week, or next month. I'm just going to think about today. Sure I might set up some goals for myself to go to school and do this or that but if some of those goals don't come I can always set out some other goals. (Inspector, PWII, p. 27)

Because I know a lot of people that go into that program they are not serious about themselves. They are not ready or what you know. But for me I was ready because I wanted more than anything else I wanted to get to know who I am and it gives me a total different attitude and a different feelings. You know at least I know who I am now. Like these years I haven't really known who I am. That I had known for years I was a pretty -- like a good hearted person but my drinking really took me away and I would get into a lot of troubles. . . I guess never too old to change if you

> *really want to change about yourself. Like for me I really want to change because I did too much prison time and I never want to go back to jail again. . . I love my hunting. I love my trapping. . . Yes. A person should never forget about his spiritual life because I know (for) Indian people a spiritual life is a good life. . . On the long run it will help you. You should never forget. Always respect it.* (Daddy Cool, p. 1, 2, 8, 14)

> *Today I got a good life. A good head on my shoulders. I know what direction to take. I know I have been put on this earth you know to help people because I was taught for a reason. And I'm not going to change my life. If they said well if you had a chance to go back and do four years out would you not? I would tell them no. Because I've learned many good things. I learned who Superman was and Superman is. Now I learned he is an Indian and he is proud of it.* (Superman, p. 24)

Native Identity

Throughout the FLIP program, the underlying emphasis was on engaging in the process of finding out who you are. The facilitators and Elders focused on the cultural framework by sharing stories of our heritage as Native people throughout the FLIP program. Reconnecting to the culture and developing a pride in being Native has enabled the collaborators to reframe their view of the world.

> *We try and live our lives in -- we try and do things our way and we end up behind bars because there is more Indian people in prisons than white people because of our color. I guess our color doesn't match white society. It's always expressed as for impaired driving. White people who get impaired driving probably will get a fine and walk out. Indian people they pretty well throw the key away because an Indian is dangerous to public. That's the way they look at it. They haven't changed to look at it a positive way. Some Indian people are pretty good people, but the white people don't want to see that way. Like for me I go a lot about my Native ways. I have a lot of Native culture. I believe in my Native culture. The Native way. The spiritual way of life with different kind of ceremonies. Pipe ceremonies. . . The*

white people have brought that liquor out here first to an Indian people. And from my part they can keep their liquor. I don't need it. I want to walk another road and I want to keep up a good life and start to live now. That's all I've got to say. (Daddy Cool, PWII, p. 23)

The anger is just that the whole of my society, of my identity being lost and not knowing who I was. (Wolf, p. 3)

If we had the real meaning of the culture inside us today we wouldn't be here because our culture doesn't have alcohol. It doesn't have drugs. And that's what it's all about. Family living through the program. We are living the culture. We are walking it. We are walking with our family. When you say all my relations it means all of us together. All Aboriginal people and we improve it every day because we have the faith of what is ahead of us. (Superman, PWII, p. 13)

From that hurt child to that man now I know who I am. I know who Coyote is and he's cool. He's all right. He's what he should have been a long time ago because I don't think he would have came into the system if he found out who he really was. Yes. Because nobody really wanted to show me who I was. I had lost it. Like when I first came into like four years old into the government under the government social program I had six braids down to my butt you know. They cut that off after a month and I was lost between them. Like they cut my hair off and my way of doing (culture) you know. From that day I lost everything because the assimilation started. You know God damn I hate some of those people for doing it but that was the direction I was given to take so I took it. A hurting direction but where I am now. (Coyote, p. 33)

Reconnecting with your Native identity was a learning process, over an expanse of time, as the Inspector illustrated throughout his story.

So having a White stepdad, I had a hard time with people from both races, White and Indian. I was constantly fighting both sides not knowing exactly what I was feeling so I grew up not knowing where I really was leaning -- to the Indian side or the White side. (Inspector, p. 1)

I've seen a lot of violence inside of jail. They have called me down. "Drunk Indian. Native Indian. Get over here." They don't care. That's how it is out there too. There are a lot of people who don't care. (Inspector, p. 16)

I was taking all kinds of programs like sharing a little bit about my alcoholic problems. I never really wanted to share with other Indians because I was afraid they would make fun of me or they would go tell people about me or their friends. So I never bothered to share anything personal. (Inspector, p. 4)

So by being in that program (FLIP) I dealt with a lot of things. I say it helped a lot of things because when somebody would be relating a story or telling a story I would remember the hurts and pains that I suffered when I was a kid as I grew up. And trying to share. I talked to some of the boys about my past pains and hurts because after a while in the program I started feeling comfortable with so many people. I wasn't scared of sharing. After a few weeks or so I felt comfortable just to say anything I wanted to and share anything because I trusted the group. Before I didn't trust anybody. They didn't laugh at me or make fun of me or told stories about me. (As I thought Native people would). So I had to take their listening and trusting me just in some way with my real feelings. There was a lot of trust. The program itself has really helped me. (Inspector, p. 8)

The Native way of seeing the world has been interwoven throughout the pathway of Daddy Cool. He expressed from his heart the Native way as he saw it.

Like for the Aboriginal people they should never lose their culture because their culture is the main thing of Indian people that was given to them. But I see a lot of Indian people lose their culture. They lose their language. They lose everything about Native way of life. That's pretty sad because the years to come is when people will need that. It's not going to be that easy in years to come yet. Like for me I see a lot of changes through I've been growing up and I see things changed so much different now. It's a scary feeling thinking about it you know. The white people don't

really understand what the Native way of life is. I think the white people should try to learn more about Native culture and stuff like that because they don't believe in it yet. I've seen a lot of white people they will laugh at Indian people because of their culture. And I feel that's not right because I think more Indian people we respect the white way. White people the way they are doing their things and I think they should respect us too a little more than what they have been doing. And they will look at us about our Native way of life. We were here before the white man ever came around this country or this earth. I think they should take a good look at Indian people because I think that's only fair. Because I know us Indian people have been mistreated of a lot of different ways of white people and they didn't have a good look at us of our way of life of how we were trying to survive and how we were trying to make our living. They took a lot of things away from us. We can't even go hunting any time we want now or our fishing. They took that rights away from the people. I don't think it's right because that is not fair for Indian people. That's their survival. (Daddy Cool, PWII, p. 22)

Goals

As a consequence of the personal philosophies that the collaborators developed throughout the FLIP program, many of them reformulated their short and long term goals. Frequently for Aboriginal people, changing involves not only a commitment to enhance their personal growth but a corresponding commitment to developing strengths within their own community. Oftentimes, these two commitments are inseparable in the Native world view. Being in the FLIP program enabled the collaborators to rechart their life journeys. In the following quotes, the collaborators discussed their goals for both helping others and themselves.

Helping Others

Talk to the kids maybe and how I got into trouble in the first place. I would like to talk to the kids then or do that sober. (Kerchief Kid, PWII, p. 1)

I always wanted to be a counselor or social worker. (Inspector, p. 24)

I think that's one of the things that is really needed for the younger generation is for the people, the older men and women and even the young ones that are in jail incarcerated to go and tell their stories. It is because the Elders once told me when I was doing time in the Max. They said, "There is no teachers out there about what life is about." They said, "You are the teachers because you have lived through that life. You are inside this institution. You are experiencing this life. There is many young ones out there that want to go and do crime. They haven't experienced what you have experienced. You are the teacher. You are the ones to do the teaching." And so you go to the school and you tell them of your experiences it might not click in right away but it will be planting the seeds, yes. It's not the route to go. That was I think needed. (Wolf, p. 5)

And here we are sitting today you know trying to heal ourselves you know and I think so much of the children, the way they lived their life and where they are sitting right now. A lot of them sit at YTC with charges of attempted murder, BNE's, car theft, stealing, running away from homes. I did all that. I went through all that and sometimes we sit here and we feel just a little too sorry for ourselves. And I think well I've got to do something because those little kids are supposed to be our leaders tomorrow, and I truly believe that. We have to reach out with what we learned from these programs and relate it to the little ones. You know go to the Elders and say, what can I do in order to help myself help these kids? We were taught in the right ways through the programs like the FLIP. . . Let's go out and do that. Let's go to schools and tell them our stories. (Superman, PWII, p. 12)

The Personal Connection

I'm going to do it for myself. Nobody else. Sure there is a lot of people out there that care about me. They don't like to see me in jail and this and that. Deep down there is a lot of those friends they don't give a shit about you. You can

have a dam good time out there and get into trouble and where are they when you get into trouble and do they come and visit you in jail and write you letters. Do they phone you or do you phone them? No. There's nobody out there because they don't give a shit. This is where I have to learn to be able to take control of my life and not worry about the other person. (Inspector, PWII, p. 26)]

This FLIP program it's a good program if you want it. And it's up to you if you want it or not. It's like any other program -- alcohol, drug programs. If you want to quit then you will take it in. I know that I have a lot of struggle and I'm going to have a lot of struggles out there. But I've always told my wife that no matter what happens today I will be sober. I've always had the problem of thinking about tomorrow, next week, or next month. I'm just going to think about today. Sure I might set up some goals for myself to go to school and do this or that but if some of those goals don't come I can always set out some other goals. (Inspector, PWII, p. 27)

Just knowing I've learned a lot which will help me out there. Some day I would like to get into counseling and counsel kids. Counsel somebody that is trying to help themselves. What would be the difference?. . . Because out there that's all people did to me is preach and they didn't do any counseling or talk to me. They were just preaching. Why don't you do this, do that? (Inspector, PWII, p. 27)

You learn about yourself and how to come to terms with what you want in life. Do you want a sober life or crime or alcohol? And I know that I am not completely healed but I still have got a lot of work to do. I still have a lot of work to do dealing with my alcoholism. In my personal life I have to be able to deal with my family and be able to learn how to argue fairly. Just before when I used to take in the past every time there was an argument I would run. So I was never one to argue. I never did like arguing. I always ran. Now I know that by running nothing gets changed. Now I will go about talking and sharing and caring. (Inspector, p. 9)

Because when I get out of here I am thinking about staying sober eh. You know I am thinking about living after these 21 years I've been on drinking alcohol since I was a teen. (Kerchief Kid, p. 3)

Achieving Balance: "The things that you need to be able to survive out in society"

What kind of strategies do the collaborators talk about as being important to them in maintaining a balance when they return to society? Here are some examples of the ways they proposed to achieve and maintain a balance: using programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Adult Children of Alcoholics, changing your attitude, renewing family connections, talking and sharing, learning from others, developing a new extended family, centering spiritually, using the medicine of laughter, hearing the Sounds of the Spirit, and showing emotions and trusting.

Maintaining Support Systems

I said, hey. The tools we learned are there. But some of us seem to forget our support. We can use the tools and we can talk tools you know. We can bury them though and that's what a lot of us do. I think the institutions have a lot to offer today if you want it to happen. They have AA. They have NA. Some have ACOA. Some have the FLIP program. . . The tools. There is tools that show you how to work, how to speak, you know how to be humble at times when you need to be, how to pray, how to ask for help. You know and we don't use them then it's not working. (Superman, p. 21, 22)

Changing Your Attitude

The first thing you have to do is change your attitude. Just change that negative thinking. I've always had those negative thinking. I wouldn't amount to much. I will always be an alcoholic or drunk and not do anything with my life and be in jail all the time. Sure I don't have to I've been told. I've been told that by a lot of people. It seems like the people are still sick out there are drinking. They seen somebody trying to change their life but they show them too young. You start thinking about your sister and wife. After

you hear so much about that negative thinking towards yourself you tend to believe anything you hear. Because it's all you ever hear. (Inspector, p. 11)

Renewing Family Connections

When I moved out of my community in Northern Saskatchewan in 1987 I moved back to another small community in Northern Alberta so I stayed there for about three years or four years and I got into trouble with the law there again. . . Then I broke up with the common-law there. I had one boy. I only seen him once. He was six months old. That's the last time I seen that little boy. I don't forget about my kids and hopefully some day when I get released from here I am going straight back to work and I'm going to try and support my children you know and open up an account and hopefully I will do good this time around". (Kerchief Kid, p. 1)

(This) past release I have been visiting my sisters and they have noticed a change in my way of thinking and talking. There is no more that way of talking. . . I'm helping my sister right now because I've been through the system. . . She's very happy now. By me talking to her these past months. (Inspector, p. 12, 13)

Talking and Sharing

I know now where I can go to talk to somebody. I will go and phone somebody who listens to me who is trying to straighten out their lives. I can talk to my wife because she has been through alcohol and family violence. (Inspector, p. 22)

Learning From Others

I like to observe and watch the behaviors of a person so I can learn. That was a good group to learn from. (Wolf, p. 6)

Developing A New Extended Family

And I heard that from Bear that she is also my mother. It was funny though. I didn't expect it. I gained a brother in the program, Grey Eyes. I became somebody else's brother, Reebok who lives out West. The culture has given me a form of a family that has been taken away. That's another thing that FLIP did for me. And the thing that I was looking for was that family and I got it now. And I got the support for it and I've also got support with some of the inmates that I met. I've never had that before. (Coyote, p. 32)

When I sit here in the circle in this class -- this FLIP program, I call it my family. We have to deal with honesty within yourself. We have to deal with trust from the people inside the group that they will respect your feelings and what you share. (Superman, PWII, p. 8)

Centering Spiritually

A lot of times the people that I'm trying to associate my life around are not there or I can't get there. There again that's excuses. Just they are excuses but that's how I feel. It's like the program of Alcoholics Anonymous says "one day at a time, easy does it, live and let live, first things first." All those slogans and these are very true for me. First things first is a Native spirituality and I have to go easy with my life. Be gentle with myself. I can't rush into things I don't understand. I can't go to places and do things that I don't know or where I am really going to. (Grey Eyes, PWI, p. 1)

The spiritual foundation of an Indian person -- that's what they need to gear in on. It's because that's what everybody gear in on because if they have no spiritual foundation then you build that house and it just falls. (Wolf, p. 13)

Using The Medicine of Laughter

He started to laugh and he said, "You know what. That's the first time I've ever had an inmate come into the room and make me laugh." And that is kind of funny because I think I needed that laugh too because nobody else really laughed at

that point and unstressed kind of thought at that moment because I was going to a new unit and I didn't know what kind of people were in there so I needed some sort of comfort of being down there to know one person. And it made me feel a lot better. (Coyote, p. 15)

Hearing the Sounds of the Spirit

But I used to really like my country songs because country was a good songs, good music. For me that lifts me up. Every time when I sing a good country song it lifts me up. It makes me feel good. Even doing right now that my mind is different. Once in a while I would take guitar and sing upstairs and it makes me really feel good about myself and I can do sing it again and play violin too and I've been playing violin for a number of years and I really like about myself that I can do those things again. I start playing violin again and I'm not going to stop. (Daddy Cool, p. 13)

Showing Emotions and Trusting

I have to learn to show my emotions, to my spouse because I never did that before. To show a little emotion to show them Coyote is telling a little bit inside. It's not this big guy sitting there who has strength but doesn't want to show any emotion. You know with this going into a relationship kind of thing it's -- I have a more trusting feeling about going into one now. (Coyote p. 22)

Healing

The FLIP program enabled respondents to reflect on their everyday lived experiences. They were encouraged to relate their own stories throughout the program when family and significant other relationships, feelings and communication, substance abuse, defense mechanisms and sexuality are discussed. Acknowledging their past behavior and attitudes in the traditional healing and talking circle helped collaborators to begin the process of healing their wounds. Healing *helped collaborators to achieve a sense of balance* and to make a more successful transition to the community.

But by being in programs and learning about yourself you get strong emotionally and mentally and you feel stronger. You

know how to take it when a person tells you something. Somebody will try and put you down and you are strong enough to take it. You can take that and not run to the bottle or go and get into trouble or something. (Inspector, p. 7)

That's the program that's really teaching." But I didn't really tell them exactly what was going on in the program. They do want to know because they seem to change a lot of guys that came into that program, and they want to know why and how. They want to know who, what, where, whatever to how you can change into a program like that. Like it is an excellent program. It kind of delves into everything from being a kid to being an adult today. I really don't know how to go about it because even now I even changed my attitude towards relationships because of finding out who I am. (Coyote, p. 3)

But I think the word FLIP -- that's when I thought before what is the true meaning of the FLIP and there is many explanations that people can think of. Mine is improving your living towards bad issues, setting goals how to get back into your family with the tools and also with yourself and the people around you. When I sit here in the circle in this class -- this FLIP program, I call it my family. We have to deal with honesty within yourself. We have to deal with trust from the people inside the group that they will respect your feelings and what you share. I've taken many programs throughout the years and I have to say with honesty that this is one of the best programs because the other programs that I've taken deal a lot with employment and not actually down deep inside. (Superman, PWII, p. 8)

I think a lot of people -- I'm glad that actually I got into this program because it changed me. It changed me totally and I'm hoping some people see that because I think that they are going to need some sort of improvement of what they'd done in their life or even in the change of attitude. I think some people need some sort of approval of what they have done or what they are going to be doing. They need that approval from somebody who is helping them. (Coyote, p. 32)

> *In the last six weeks in this group I can actually say I've learned a few more things that I never knew about the healing part the first week, of the culture and the relationships, and the family violence. I heard a lot about the classmates and talked about their feelings. I've really respected the tears that most of us have shared and that's the good thing. The instructors they shared a lot you know. They are like us. They are human. They also learned a lot but when I sit down and I hear people I know your fear is talking. It's hurting. That child within really wants to climb out of his shell and say, hey we are finally together and that's the good part is having the good spirit. You know and when I pray to the grandfathers when I first get up, thank you for another day. Thank you for giving me life, giving me real freedom. Freedom to me is what's in my heart.* (Superman, PWII, p. 15)

> *I think that what people really need to see is when they see a picture of somebody that has changed from being in denial about everything and hurting from being a child. You know from being the man today, that everybody needs to hurt. Everybody has a certain hurt and I think you need to share it with somebody who has the same hurt.* (Coyote, p. 10)

Part of the healing process was also acknowledging that the path is not only straight and narrow but sometimes includes putting new soles on your moccasins. It was recognizing your unhealthy actions, repairing them, and forgiving yourself for the need to rebalance.

> *I relapsed last year because I just forgot my support system. I forgot my Elders. I forgot the AA. I forgot the tools that I learned from the programs. I left that all behind and gave my medicine bag away to my Elders because I knew that I wasn't too healthy at that time. I wanted to return to the old ways and I did it just for a drunk or for a girl. You see when you forget about what you learned from your classmates and from the instructors that teach the programs you know it's a loss. We can talk and talk and talk about you know how good the programs are good for an individual but that individual has to want that program. He has to want the tools that he learns.* (Superman, PWII, p. 10)

Meo Matsuin: The Native Community

The process of changing and healing was enhanced for the collaborators during the FLIP program. FLIP enabled collaborators to reframe their life journey. For example, their personal philosophy, their Native self-identity and their proposed goals for returning to the community were seen from a different perspective after attending the FLIP program. Reconnecting to their Native roots influenced the choices that the collaborators considered when they contemplated returning to the community. Ideally, the majority of collaborators would have liked to return to the community of their extended families.

> *So I'm thinking of going back there (my small community) and make something up. A little tire shop. That's what they need because it is all gravel roads eh. And I used to be busy then and there's jobs there. I know there's jobs there and I can raise my family there because it's nice and quiet.*
> (Kerchief Kid, p. 7)

Others, like Daddy Cool and Grey Eyes are focused on leaving the fast-paced urban area for the tranquility of the rural environment.

> *Like for me in a big city like this I could never live in a big city. I'm not used to the city. I never lived in a big city like that. I think I would have a hard time if I lived in the city. I don't think I would ever get used to it anyway because I'm from a bush. A real bushman eh. I live out in the country. I miss out in the country. Even being here in this halfway house my mind is always out in the country because that's my life out there you know and you feel good when you are out in the bush. Always get a fresh air, nice hear bird singing and what not. It's beautiful. Go fishing and what not. Then you don't have to worry about car getting to run over you in the bush. Not like the city here. If you walk some place you always have to watch somebody going to run over you. This is a hard life for a lot of people that I know in here. I know a lot of people can't even hardly read and they lived in the city here and that makes it really hard.*
> (Daddy Cool, p. 5)

> *I had to adapt into the city way of life which was very foreign to me in my early years.* (Grey Eyes, PWI, p. 2)

The connection to Mother Earth is part of the cultural heritage of Native people. The Mother Earth connection implied not only the expanse of the universe but the comradeship with other Native people. However, reestablishing that connection and meeting the conditions of release was sometimes difficult to achieve. Grey Eyes shared his frustrations with the lack of flexibility in this area.

> *But because of the system, about the parole and mandatory. They don't want you to go home. You have to stay here, stay there, do this, take that and so on and so forth. . . So they have taken me away from my environment and that is where I felt comfortable and put me in a place where I wasn't comfortable so naturally what did I do? I looked for Native people where they hung around. I got caught up in dug roots, and dug rut.* (Grey Eyes, PWI, p.2)

Native people have a strong attachment to their communities. However, making the decision about where to re-establish yourself may be determined by factors outside your control. As mentioned above, the conditions of release was one factor. Another factor was finding a supportive community connection that would enable the transition process to the community to be more successful. These linkages to the community are sometimes difficult to re-establish.

For instance, as some of the collaborators increasingly became enmeshed in the criminal justice system, their connections to their families and communities became more and more fragmented. Not only that, but both the family and community may not be on the healing path that the collaborators have chosen. Therefore, returning home may not be a realistic way of maintaining the balance that the collaborators have strived towards. Daddy Cool was emphatic about not going home.

> *I know I ain't going to go live back home when I get out down there. I am living some place else and not there. The friends that I thought I had there they are not friends you know. They are people you just can't trust. But if I live*

> *some place else you always made new friends and get a new friend or people you know and it's better like that.* (Daddy Cool, p. 6)

> *A lot of people that I know from back home they will never have positive thinking. Negative thinking. Oh I know I like to do this but I know I can't do it. Right there. Right from the beginning they deny it that they can do it.* (Daddy Cool, p. 8)

At an earlier stage of his life, the Inspector had returned to his family and community. He perceived staying sober as a primary goal in successfully making the transition to the community. Unfortunately, his family was incapable of being supportive of his decision.

> *But I know I had a problem with drinking. I know how hard I tried to quit. I just wasn't strong enough to quit. I tried quitting once and my family knew I tried. I was sincere at quitting. I went to visit one Aunty and there just happened to be a party there. I seen my Mom here I just come out of a year and a half or two years. My Mom passed me a drink and I said, "No thanks. I'm trying to quit. I'm tired of it." She turned around and said, "Well if you don't want to drink that means you don't love me." That hurt quite a bit. She started crying and I couldn't take it so I used to think, I tried my best with just a few simple words. It made me drink again. So that really put me back in jail".* (Inspector, p. 4)

Now, the Inspector was leaving the confines of the institution again. The FLIP program has enabled him to reflect on his past, and anticipate what he needed to remain committed to staying out of jail. The Inspector chose to live in Saskatchewan so he would not be subjected to the negative influence of violence and alcohol that still remained a problem for his family.

> *I know I will have a hard time to break off this bottle. In Alberta I have a lot of friends and family and church, mostly everybody I know. . . I don't have anyone in Saskatchewan to drink with. In Saskatchewan I don't even have anybody where my wife is. . . I don't have friends in Saskatchewan because my wife and two little brothers and sisters are the only ones I know, other than anybody else. I am happy with*

that. . . I have support from my wife and (her) family. They don't drink or do anything. (Inspector, p. 17, 18).

Messages to the Would Be Healers in the Community

Throughout the dialogue with the collaborators, they made suggestions as to how those who interact with Natives in the criminal justice system could meet the needs of Native offenders. Grey Eyes, Superman, and the Inspector shared their comments below.

In order to work effectively (with) a Native person within an institution or the system, first and foremost you have to be a Native person to be able to communicate with that person. (Grey Eyes, PWI, p. 2)

Sure it is fine to get all the education you know for yourself to be able to help people but always remember you have to heal yourself in order to heal people. And by healing people it's to help. You can't help a person if he's the only one that needs help. You can only share your experiences in life through the pain and the anger and the hate that you've done. There is many of us that are in classes today that haven't done that and how in the hell are they going to help people when they can't even help themselves. And always remember the culture. It's part of you. Pick it up and respect it as it respects you. (Superman, p. 24)

Because I know that social workers don't sometimes understand. A lot of education but they don't want to understand alcohol and drinking and stuff. I've lived through it. I've done it to my own kids leaving them home beside themselves. They should teach social workers about things like really sit in a program for seven weeks and I think they would learn. (Inspector, p. 24)

They are there and when you go to a class I just want to say something to the (university) students you know. Sure it is fine to get all the education you know for yourself to be able to help people but always remember you have to heal yourself in order to heal people. (Superman. p. 24)

> *I think that what people really need to see is when they see a picture of somebody that has changed from being in denial about everything and hurting from being a child. You know from being the man today, that everybody needs to hurt. Everybody has a certain hurt and I think you need to share it with somebody who has the same hurt.* (Coyote, p. 10)

Meo Matsuin: Collaborating and Trusting

> *So what do you want to know?* (Daddy Cool, p. 1)

> *Well I don't know exactly what we are supposed to be saying.* (Wolf, p. 1)

The above excerpts are the beginning phrases of two of the collaborative interviews with the collaborators. Although I had previously discussed with both residents that I was interested in the nature of their experiences in the FLIP program, they asked again. To me, the underlying message behind their words was "Are you really asking me to *choose what I wish to share* , or are you indirectly dictating to me *what you want me to share ?*" They wanted me to reaffirm whether or not they could talk to me and share what they chose, or let me set the agenda? Would I listen, and if so, would it go anywhere? Another one of the collaborators was anxious to see the finished product. Was I really going to put something together that would make a difference, or was the collaboration going to lead to a dead end, again?

Meo Matsuin Collaboration: Reflections on the Personal Dimension

The research question that provided the focus for the research was "What is the nature of the experiences of male Native offenders attending a program (FLIP) designed to facilitate the transition from correctional institutions to the community?" The three secondary questions embedded within the primary question focused on the processes of: engaging in self discovery, reclaiming Native culture and reconnecting to Native spirituality.

Beginning the process of collaboration, I shared my observation with the other collaborators that little research had been designed that directly asked male Native

offenders about their experiences in the criminal justice system. I further elaborated that I thought that their stories and experiences needed to be told if the over representation of Natives in the criminal justice system was going to change. They all wanted to know if I was going to ask questions. I replied by saying, "No, I want you to share whatever you feel comfortable to share about your experiences in FLIP". The collaborators began their stories at different points in their lived experience. However, most of our interaction consisted of the dialogue of their story, interspersed with the occasional, "I know what you mean", or "Is that right?" and frequent non verbal body cues and "uh huh" to let them know that I was listening and hearing.

My involvement with the FLIP program over the period of one year helped the collaborators to feel comfortable in sharing. I was a familiar figure and very comfortable in the atmosphere of the Stan Daniels Center. More significantly, I was a fellow collaborator in the FLIP program. I had shared my story, my vulnerability and my commitment to the Native way. We had developed bonds of respect and trust during the journey of FLIP, therefore, the data that emerged was the result of mutual collaboration with co-investigators rather than an interviewer/interviewee relationship.

Attempting to re-present the experiences of male Native residents was almost overwhelming for me as a researcher. The in-depth, meaningful dialogue that was shared from the heart of the collaborators demanded my intensive ongoing reflection. Before beginning the process of reviewing the transcripts, I journalized at length about my experiences during the collaboration process. Ongoing journal writing and dialogue with the other collaborators, Elders and other members of the Native community enabled me to remain grounded in my perspective as principle investigator, collaborator and scribe. The study has been a process of re-searching experience but the experience is ongoing. The collaboration provided a venue for restating and validating who we, as Native people, are.

Engaging in self discovery, reclaiming Native culture and reconnecting to Native spirituality are dynamic ongoing processes. It was difficult to separate these three pathways as they inevitably intertwined with one another. In essence, they became a holistic journey of self exploration. The collaborators began the journey of FLIP from their own separate world view, nevertheless, they expressed that they had gained a more comprehensive understanding of the Aboriginal world view.

Each collaborator was born into the Sacred Circle. Through their experiences as children and adolescents in families fragmented by alcohol, violence, abuse, and lack of cultural connectedness, the collaborators became enmeshed in the criminal justice system. Their connections to Native culture largely remained either unknown or unexplored. They felt lost, alone and powerless to change. Gradually, through the intervention of significant persons or events in their everyday life, they began the process of turning themselves around.

The FLIP program provided an opportunity for the collaborators to re-examine themselves, their Native culture and spirituality and to begin the process of healing. Native culture and spirituality was interwoven throughout the program, providing a holistic framework that the collaborators could use to reinterpret their life journeys thus far and to reframe their future attitudes, behavior and actions.

The opportunity to share their stories helped the collaborators to begin the process of achieving harmony and balance in their mental, emotional, physical and spiritual selves. A collective sense of knowing and understanding was developed in the healing and talking circle. Forgotten stories of bannock for lunches and cutting endless cords of firewood were shared in the teasing, humorous Native way.

Acknowledging in the presence of other Aboriginal people, the roots of oppression, rekindled their intuitive knowledge about who we are. Experiencing that the Native way could facilitate the transition to the bicultural society, gave the collaborators a rationale for reframing their life journey. Reconnecting to other Native

people, as survivors of fragmented lives now grounded in Native spirituality, precipitated a rebirth of our Native identity within the womb of our community. Gradually, pride, in our Native culture and ourselves as Aboriginal people, the caretakers of the earth from time immemorial, resurfaced.

The sweat lodge ceremonies evoked humility and spiritual connectedness between us and "all our relations". The intimacy of the sweat lodge ceremonies reconnected the collaborators to themselves, the Creator and Mother Earth. Asking the Creator to share your burdens provided another Native way of healing past hurts, fears and traumas.

Listening and acknowledging the stories of the other collaborators helped to validate our own personal experiences. Often, the collaborators repeated the same phrases: was I only listening and not hearing? Recognizing that your voice has really been heard by others completed the remaining piece of the puzzle. I was profoundly moved when one of the collaborators stated that "No one listened before". Sharing your story, with your own people, who have shared qualitative versions of the *same* stories was heart wrenching but ultimately instrumental in enabling collaborators to begin the process of change. The messages to the heart and the head reverberated with the question: "If he can, then why can't I??"

Relapse was an inevitable part of the picture. When one of the collaborators in the program did not return from a weekend pass, the other collaborators expressed care and concern. The collaborators surmised that maybe he wasn't ready to face his impending release to the community. Maybe his support system collapsed, or his significant other withdrew her support and acceptance, or his financial support was shaky or nonexistent, or maybe his intuitive knowing, trusting and respecting of who he was, just wasn't as well developed as he thought.

Forgiving yourself, healing your wounds and envisioning tomorrow was a long term, ongoing process that occurred over the sands of time. The Native way involved a

commitment over a lifetime but also acknowledged that discovering what the Creator has carved out for us was a journey filled with experiences through which we would grow and learn. The journey has renewed my patience, humility and understanding.

Reflecting within the FLIP program and within the privacy of my journal has taught me and some of the other collaborators to approach a spiritual journey of life, one day at a time. The journey of our self exploration is everlasting. As in the beginning, the threads of the Sacred Circle are weaving a healing path to follow. The collaboration experience was but a moment of time captured utilizing the mediums of speech, audio tape, keyboards and paper. When the time is right, our intuitive knowing, our family, our friends, and our environments will intertwine to provide us a safer haven in society than the one that we are now experiencing. The next step in the journey is to reflect on how the journey of the FLIP program enabled the resident collaborators to unfold their wings.

Chapter Five

REFLECTIONS OF THE JOURNEY

Cultural Reflections

The flaps of the sweat lodge are rising. The sun of Mother Earth filters into our spiritual embrace within the sweat lodge. The ceremony has reaffirmed our harmony and balance in the cosmos through our connection to Manitowa(h), the Great Spirit. The Grandfathers have been accorded respect. Manitowa(h) has given us another day for self-discovery, reaffirming our Native identity and reconnecting to our traditions and spirituality. As the Elders say, "What goes around, comes around. The stories and reflections of the collaboration have been shared. The Time is Right for reflection and exploration of the journey of the FLIP program, thus far.

The circle is the symbolic representation of the Native vision. It encompasses the entire cosmos including both inanimate and animate beings. The sacred circle of Aboriginal people is divided into four parts. Four is a sacred number in Native culture: there is four sacred directions, four sacred colors, four races of humans and four ages of human life. Within the circle of life, all beings share an equal and interdependent status. Our power, as Native people, originates within the realm of the sacred circle. Each fragment in the cosmos has been carved out to fit within the sacred circle. Therefore, the complementary relationship with other beings must be honored and respected.

The Native culture honored and celebrated the uniqueness of each individual. In the Native circle of life, human beings are neither above or below other beings but are at the same level. Underlying this relationship was an understanding that the Native way is to strive to maintain this balance. Each one has their own spiritual path to

explore: that is the journey of life. Traditional knowledge and teachings are a source of enlightenment along life's journey.

The journeys of countless generations of Native people have revolved around the sacred circle. It was the responsibility of each individual to seek and follow his own journey. We all possess within ourselves the ability to reconnect ourselves to Manitowa(h). We gain an understanding of the meaning of our life's journey through our interconnections to the Great Spirit. The meaning of our life's journey is to discover the sacred vision that the Creator gave each one of us. Obstacles in our pathway are envisioned as opportunities for growth. The FLIP program has helped us, as brothers and sisters who are the foundation of the Medicine Wheel, to discover our own vision and to progress along the path of our journey.

One of the legacies of Native people is our intuitive knowledge. One of the ways of empowering ourselves and others is to share our visions. It is a responsibility that is honored and respected in our culture. In essence, that is what the collaborators of the FLIP program have done. Each one of them has created an inner vision from the experience of reconnecting their heart and head. We have already traversed the initial steppingstones to our cultural heritage of Native identity and spirituality. Our lived experience combined with the knowledge and teachings of the Elders will enable us to walk a spiritual pathway.

The framework of the dialogue throughout the research study has been grounded in respecting Native people and their insights. Consequently, the reflections about the FLIP program suggested in the pages to follow focuses primarily on the views of the collaborators. At this point in the research journey, it is difficult and probably unnecessary to separate the contributions of the respondents, as the research journey has really been a collaborative effort. Nevertheless, I would not be presenting these reflections, if they were not meaningful to me as well. As the principle researcher/collaborator/scribe, I have delved into the background research context

because that is where some of my talents lie, together we have shared the voyage of the FLIP program, and the other collaborators have contributed their stories and experiences. Sharing your gifts with the Native community is an underlying responsibility of Native people. For too long, the insights and intuitive knowing of Aboriginal people have been ignored, dismissed and/or discounted. The time is right for the knowledge and insight shared throughout their stories to be validated.

Journey of Self-Exploration

The figure to follow is a visual representation of the journey of self-exploration which reflects my perception of the holistic journey walked and talked by the collaborators during the research study.

All Aboriginal people are born within the web of the Sacred Circle. However, often we do not experiencing a warm, nurturing environment inside and outside our families. In response, acting out behavior occurs which leads to involvement in the criminal justice system. In order to survive in the system, we react by shutting down our feelings and shutting out other people.

However, the FLIP program intercedes for some and helps us to re-examine and reformulate our past. It enables us to reflect on ourselves and our relationships. It provides the opportunity to reconnect to Native culture and explore Native spirituality. The journey of self-exploration does not always proceed smoothly, often we stumble along the journey.

The FLIP program also provides the opportunity to recognize and question our oppression as Native peoples. Reconnecting to our Native culture and spirituality enables us to re-examine our Native identity.

Throughout the journey of FLIP and the ongoing journey of life, we struggle to achieve a renewed balance in the Sacred Circle. We seek to integrate the four dimensions of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health into the intertwined web of relationships: community, family and self.

Balance in the Sacred Circle
Re-examining Native Identity
Recognizing & Questioning Oppression
Exploring Native Spirituality
Reconnecting to Native Culture
Self & Relationships
Reformulating the Past
Sacred Circle

FLIP Program Reflections

Although the respondents have shared the nature of their experiences in the previous chapter, their reflections on the FLIP program have been primarily centered on their own personal growth and change as well as their reconnections to Native tradition and spirituality. In the section to follow, the respondents share their reflections on other aspects of the FLIP program.

Gender Issues in the FLIP Program

The FLIP program at the Stan Daniels Center sought to enable the residents to make a successful transition to the community. Therefore, members from the Native community are also encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to share in the process of self discovery and to reconnect to their Native roots in the FLIP program. The administrators, the Elder and the facilitators at Stan Daniels encouraged the participation of women in the FLIP program. Thus, FLIP program participants are both men and women. The collaborators stated that they find that women participants in the program are an asset.

Historically, in Aboriginal culture, both men and women played complementary roles. For instance, in the Plains Cree culture, women are said to be strong, and men are encouraged to look to women as guides in developing their strength. Women's strength is connected to Mother Earth and her ability to provide nurturance and sustenance to her family and herself was recognized. Women's intuitive nature was also acknowledged. One of the residents explained the importance of women in the following way. He sees women as more able to openly express their feelings and emotions. Openly expressing their feelings encourages the male participants in the FLIP program to also learn how to openly communicate their feelings. Having both women and men in the program reflects the community involvement in the Stan Daniels Center. It gives the participants an opportunity to practice some of their new knowledge and skills developed throughout the FLIP program in a safe, supportive

atmosphere. Another one of the collaborators felt strongly about having women in the program.

> *"It is needed. I feel it's needed because if they just have straight men there is different side to a man that comes out when there is just men where they want to be that real macho and not feeling type. Then when the women get involved they reverse that and they show their feeling and they are more expressive to it and the man is looking and planting this seed. Okay this is how I got to do it. And the same with the women. They can observe and they can see how the men are reacting. And some of the men in there are probably in there for beating up on their wives or whatever or have been sexually abused and like that the women that do come in there I would say that 89% of them have been sexually abused. So the balance is there. If it was 30% women which is usually where it's at, 60% men and then there is little confrontation sometimes. If there was more women inside involved then I think it would be a lot more successful. I think it would. Not just all young pretty girls. A variety. It's up to the facilitators how to select the groups".* (Wolf, p. 16)

Another program that explored Native identity and spirituality was offered at the Ma Ma Wa Ti Chi Itata Center in Winnipeg. Their programs focused separately on men, women and children. The FLIP program was constantly evolving new ways of successfully meeting the needs of Native offenders and sought to integrate the genders. Further research is needed to substantiate whether other culturally sensitive programs in Canada include both men, women and children to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs.

Widening the Circle of the FLIP Program

The original FLIP program began at Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) in the early 1980's. It was designed to meet the needs of women who were in crisis and wanted to regain the custody of their children from Family and Social Services. However, the administration at Stan Daniels felt that the program could be

adapted to meet the needs of male Native offenders. FLIP at SDC began in 1988 and continues to evolve to meet the needs of the participants.

The impact on some of the collaborators has been profound and has altered their life's journey. Collaborators from the administration outside the program and collaborators from inside the program have both suggested that the circle of FLIP could easily be adapted for use by parents, the helping professions, and Native communities besieged by alcohol abuse, fragmented families and family violence (Inspector, p. 27; Brown Eyes, p.11). In a dialogue with the Executive Director of NCSA, he agreed that the FLIP program has been a positive force in the rehabilitation of Native offenders. Nevertheless, he cautions that FLIP is successful simply because it meets the expressed needs of the participants and reflects local conditions. Therefore, for FLIP to be successful elsewhere, these two criteria above would need to be considered (Cunningham, C. R., 1994). Unfortunately, few evaluations of programs designed for Native offenders have been published (Zellerer, 1992). Evaluating the programs and communicating the results throughout the Correctional Services of Canada and the Native communities would provide a cost effective means of implementing programs that meet the needs of the Native community both inside and outside institutions.

"Keeping Clean"

"Keeping Clean" was an expression used by the residents of SDC to describe the process of maintaining sobriety and continuing on a spiritual healing path when you return to the community. Achieving and maintaining a balanced lifestyle based on the Native way required the support and commitment of other Native community members. Furthermore, two of the collaborators suggested that a FLIP aftercare would provide a reconnection to the talking and healing circle of FLIP; that would revitalize the commitment to maintaining an active role in Native tradition and spirituality (Wolf, p. 14; Brown Eyes, p. 8). As the crucial time period for residents who are returning to the community was the first three months, (Beaver, p. 4) it would be appropriate to

implement a short term follow-up during this time. Other programs, such as the one at the Nechi Institute that focuses on drug and alcohol, include a follow-up component (Sillito, 1988). Although both financial constraints and staff shortages across Canada continue to be problematic, further research such as a pilot project, that would evaluate the effectiveness of including follow up in the FLIP program would provide an example to others as well as benefitting the programs at SDC.

Reconnecting to the Native Community

The underlying philosophy of the Stan Daniels Center and the FLIP program is a holistic one that was grounded in Native tradition and spirituality. Both the collaborators, (Daddy Cool, p. 14; Coyote, p. 18; Wolf, p. 7) and other researchers, (Couture, 1985; Waldram, in press; Zellerer, 1992) acknowledged the importance of reconnecting to traditional Native ways and spirituality to enable residents to reestablish a positive Native identity. The Stan Daniels Center encouraged community involvement as much as possible.

Support within the Native community outside the institutions was also vitally important in maintaining the commitment begun in the institutions (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; McCaskill, 1985; Morse & Lock, 1988). Often, residents would like to re-establish themselves in their communities of origin when they return to society but seldom does the community have an established support system including programs and resources to meet these needs (Cawsey, 1991; Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; Minore, 1992).

A cultural reconnection and balanced lifestyle may be easier to achieve in the rural area, where the majority of Native offenders originate, rather than the inner city area of the urban environment (LaPrairie, 1985, 1992). The development of community programs and resources may provide a way for collaborators to share their insights into the process of reexamining themselves and their Native roots and to contribute to community regeneration. Some of the collaborators were unable to

consider returning to their communities of origin because their families and peer group did not have the opportunity to begin the process of healing and changing (Daddy Cool, p. 8; Inspector, p. 4, 17, 18). Therefore, exploring the feasibility of developing more community based facilities for Native offenders may be both cost effective and also help the communities to heal themselves in the long term. However, little research has been done in this area to confirm these tentative findings.

Acknowledging and Addressing Racial Discrimination

Throughout the discourse with the collaborators, the issue of racial discrimination arose. The majority of the collaborators had experienced racial discrimination in one form or another both inside and outside the institutions (Coyote, p. 33; Daddy Cool, PWII, p. 23; Inspector, p. 16; Superman, p. 11). Re-examining your past history, engaging in self discovery, reconnecting to Native identity and spirituality helped the collaborators to begin the process of healing and changing. However, if , when returning to society, the stereotypical view of a Native person biases others against you without allowing for individual differences, healing and changing cannot reach their full potential. Both the collaborators, (Daddy Cool, p. 8, Wolf, p. 3) and other researchers, (Couture, 1985; Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991, Morse & Lock, 1988; Nielsen, 1990) suggest that society also must be prepared to reexamine its oppression towards Native peoples if the cycle of marginalization is to be interrupted. Validating the stories of Native collaborators in the institutions and acting on their reflections and recommendations would help to fill the research gap that considers the perspectives of administrators, social workers, psychologists but seldom the resident collaborators themselves (Couture, 1985; Davis-Patsula & Mogey, 1993; Waldram, in press; Zellerer, 1992).

Oral Tradition

In the days of our forefathers, Native culture and tradition was passed by word of mouth from one generation to another. Keepers of the tradition, Elders and

Medicine People shared the sacred wisdom with only a select few. Some Elders continue the practice of maintaining the teachings and traditions only through oral discourse. Other Elders are somewhat more flexible in their attitudes towards the written word. I chose the narrative form of storytelling and used the ethnographic approach of attempting to describe and understand the meaning of the collaborators' stories as defined by themselves. This approach seemed to be the most respectful way of composing the life journeys of the collaborators in FLIP. More research that respects the rights of the Native community to be involved in the research process needs to be undertaken by the Native community and its own researchers.

Listening and Hearing

One of the most powerful and thought provoking messages shared throughout the dialogue with the collaborators were the phrases: "I had no one to talk to" and "No one listened" (Inspector, p. 15). During the process of collaboration, the respondents were given the opportunity to share whatever they were comfortable with about their experiences in FLIP. Although I directly stated I wanted them to share their experiences in FLIP and whatever else they were comfortable with, the in-depth meaningful dialogue that the collaborators shared was humbling and more than I expected. I felt honored to be part of the process of storytelling that enabled the collaborators to engage in self discovery and reinterpret their world view as the dialogue evolved. Throughout the interview process, I asked the one question, then engaged in a primarily non-verbal affirmation of their discourse. I was transfixed by the degree of reflection and intuitive knowing. The words tumbled out of their mouths. In fact, when I reviewed the transcripts, I found that numerous times throughout the collaboration, the respondents had repeated themselves. Often, word for word, two, sometimes three, sentences in succession. Learning to overcome your powerlessness and helpless when you are in a subordinate position is also part of the process of healing. Only recently, have Native offenders had the opportunity to share their stories

and experiences (Cawsey, 1991; Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991, Morse & Lock, 1988; Waldram, in press). More research that focuses on the experiences of Native offenders is necessary if the over representation of Native peoples in the criminal justice system is to be addressed. The fundamental question is: "Are you listening and really hearing? Will the storytelling be validated by the implementation of changes in programs and institutions?"

Native people are reclaiming and empowering themselves and their vision of the world. An old Hopi prophecy predicted that the 7th generation would rise up and begin the process of cultural revitalization: the time is right. The collaborators are rising above their oppression and using their Native heritage to reformulate a new life for themselves. No longer are Native people prepared to let others interrupt the flow of our own visions. Our pride and understanding of our Native identity and spirituality will enable us to continue to walk the walk and talk the talk of our forefathers.

Native people feel a primary responsibility to nurture their own communities. Native people continue to be warriors. However, the battlegrounds of yesterday were Mother Earth. The battle grounds of today are the survival of our souls, our culture, our spirituality, and our right to be acknowledged and respected for *who we are*.

Reflecting on the research journey has reaffirmed my intuitive knowledge that we, as Native people, have continued to survive because of the underlying strength of our cultural heritage. For many of us, our cultural connections have been reestablished through the journey of self-exploration. Pride in our heritage has developed as a result of our personal journeys of re-searching ourselves and our roots. Thus, the research journey was a culmination of self, academic and community exploration. However, my own personal journey in the academic and Native world would have remained unfulfilled without the web of collaboration initiated by the FLIP program.

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Appendix A

The Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

The purpose of the study is to learn about the experiences of residents, ex-residents, the Elder, facilitators and administrators in the FLIP program. I am a Native graduate student at the U of A. I will be interviewing individuals and the FLIP group about the program.

I would be interested in talking with you about your experiences in the FLIP program. If you are agreeable, the interviews will be taped on audio-cassettes. The stories you share will be kept private and confidential. Code names will be used so you cannot be identified by what you say. Besides myself, only the typist will listen to the tapes. The thesis committee may read parts of the taped interviews. The results and findings of the study may be presented at conferences, or published in research journals.

Talking about your experiences in FLIP is your choice. You are encouraged to share what you feel comfortable with. You are free to stop the interview at any time. You can also decide not to continue to participate in the study at any time. Sharing your experiences will in no way affect your residence at Stan Daniels Center, or your case management or release plans. You may not personally benefit from the study, however, it may be helpful to others that plan programs for Native people to understand your experiences in the FLIP program from your point of view.

If you have any questions or concerns, please ask Marilyn Mogey (492-5141) or Dr. D.K Kieren (492-5770).

Appendix B

The Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Experiences of the Participants in

The Family Life Improvement Program (FLIP)

Stan Daniels Correctional Center

This is to certify that I, _____,
(print name)

agree to participate as a volunteer in this research project. I am aware of the purposes of the study and what is involved. All my questions have been answered in a way that I understand. I am aware that each interview may be tape recorded by the researcher. I can withdraw from the study at any time. If I have any questions or concerns, I can contact the researcher, (Marilyn Mogey: 492-5141), or her supervisor, (Dr. D. K. Kieren: 492-5770) at any time.

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If you wish to receive a summary of the study when it is finished, please complete the following:

Name:

Address:

Appendix C

The FLIP Program

OSKIPI MATSUIN (NEW LIFE) PROGRAM

OUTLINE

MODULE I

Introduction to Program
Native Cultural Awareness

MODULE II

Personal Awareness

MODULE III

Feelings and Communication

MODULE IV

Family Relationships

MODULE V

Addictions and Violence

MODULE VI

Human Sexuality

MODULE VII

Community Awareness